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No one can stop our democratic progress

Yunus addresses nation on Victory Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday reiterated his government's pledge to hold a credible national election, warning that defeated fascist forces are plotting a return ahead of the polls through various destabilising tactics.

"They will do this in various ways. This attempt at covert killing is one such way. They have preparations for even harsher plans," he said in a televised Victory Day address to the nation, referring to the recent assassination attempt on Sharif Osman Hadi, spokesperson for the Inqilab Moncho.

However, he reassured the nation that the country would continue to progress, defying all conspiracies.

"I want to state clearly that the defeated fascist terrorists' attempts will be foiled. No one will be able to halt the country's democratic progress through fear, terror or bloodshed," he said, urging people to remain calm and not be misled by misinformation or rumours.

"The defeated fascist forces will never return to the sacred soil of this country," he added.

Beginning his address, the chief adviser extended greetings to Bangladeshis at home and abroad and paid tribute to the brave fighters and martyrs of the nine-month Liberation War of 1971.

"After a blood-soaked nine-month-long Liberation War in 1971, on this day, we tasted our desired victory. Through immense sacrifice and endurance, and in exchange for the blood of lakhs of martyrs, we gained an independent country and a red-and-green flag," he said.

Yunus also expressed profound sorrow over the attack on Hadi, also an aspirant from Dhaka 8 and a frontline fighter of the July uprising.

"This is not merely an attack on an individual; it is an attack on the very existence of Bangladesh and on our democratic journey," he said.

He said Hadi is undergoing treatment in critical condition and that the government has taken all necessary measures to ensure his treatment and security.

"The government is viewing this incident with utmost seriousness. Those involved have been identified at the preliminary stage. I assure the people that whoever is involved in this conspiracy, wherever they may be, none will be spared," he said.

Emphasising the need to protect the youth, Yunus said those who fled the country know that the "unarmed, fearless young fighters" pose a formidable challenge to them.

"The objective of the defeated fascist forces is to remove these obstacles from the streets before the election to reestablish their rule," he said.

Without naming anyone or any country, the chief adviser said the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



- ➊ Defeated forces plotting return thru violence
- ➋ No conspirator will be spared
- ➌ Polls, referendum to be held on time
- ➍ Parties should compete, not act as enemies

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



A new system must replace old political order
Says Shafiqur Rahman

STAR REPORT



Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said the politics of future Bangladesh would follow a new system, discarding the old political order.

"The politics of the new system will oppose terrorism, extortion, murder, rape, false cases, corruption, injustice and all forms of oppression," he said at a youth marathon organised by Jamaat on the occasion of Victory Day at Suhrawardy Uddyan.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Enemies of independence plotting anew
Says Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said those who opposed Bangladesh's independence in 1971 are once again trying to raise their heads.

"Today, the enemies of independence, those who stood against independence in 1971, are trying to rise again. The freedom-loving people of Bangladesh, who believe in independence and democracy, will foil all their conspiracies and will surely protect the country's independence and sovereignty and establish democracy," Fakhrul told reporters.

He made the remarks after placing wreaths at the grave of BNP founder and martyred president Ziaur Rahman at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, marking Victory Day.

The BNP leader said the Liberation War began with the declaration of independence by martyred President Ziaur Rahman and reached its final victory on December 16.



SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

SUBODH RETURNS

Anonymous graffiti artist, known only by the tag "Hobeki?", revived the iconic Subodh series yesterday on the nation's 54th Victory Day. In the new mural on the Air Force wall in the capital's Agargaon, a man whose waist belt holds a paintbrush and spray can embraces a little girl wearing a helmet and carrying the national flag. The Subodh series first appeared at this very spot in 2017, with its last mural seen on August 5, 2024.

PHOTO: UNB

July fighters' safety can't depend on govt, police
Says Nahid



OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Savar

National Citizens Party Convener Md. Nahid Islam yesterday said the safety of July fighters cannot be ensured by relying on the government or police, stressing the need for self-reliance in safeguarding

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



VICTORY IN THE SKIES... Marking the country's 54th Victory Day yesterday, the Bangladesh Air Force painted the skies with streams of colour, staging a spectacular display honouring the spirit of the 1971 Liberation War. The photo was taken from the capital's Bijoy Sarani area.

PHOTO: STAR

Govt backtracking on surveillance reforms?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government appears to be backtracking on its plan to introduce sweeping reforms curbing state-led surveillance, just over a month since an ordinance was drafted.

The latest draft of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Ordinance 2025 reintroduces broad surveillance powers and removes several of the safeguards proposed earlier, The Daily Star has learnt from officials with knowledge of the matter.

The changes will alter how interception authority is defined, approved and overseen. Oversight mechanisms have also been revised.

The latest proposals say the council will be headed by the home secretary, with the secretary of the law ministry's legislative and parliamentary affairs division and the principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division serving as members. They do not include judicial members, leaving the approval and execution of surveillance within the same administrative hierarchy.

The original draft, which was uploaded on the Posts and Telecommunications Division website for public feedback last month,

proposed a council with quasi-judicial characteristics, including retired judges and representatives linked to constitutional bodies, to review interception requests.

It said members of the council would serve a four-year term and could be reappointed or replaced at the discretion of the council.

The council would be required to meet at least twice a week, during which it would review

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interception applications and decide whether to approve, amend or reject them, it added.

All decisions must be formally recorded and open to audit and could be challenged through an appeal process.

In addition, individuals would be allowed to submit complaints to the council alleging unlawful interception.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

A renewed pledge for national unity
Country celebrates Victory Day

STAR REPORT

With a call for a renewed commitment to national unity, Bangladesh yesterday celebrated its 54th Victory Day, marking the nation's liberation from Pakistani occupation after a nine-month war.

On this day in 1971, Bangladesh was born as an independent state at the cost of the supreme sacrifices of 30 lakh martyrs.



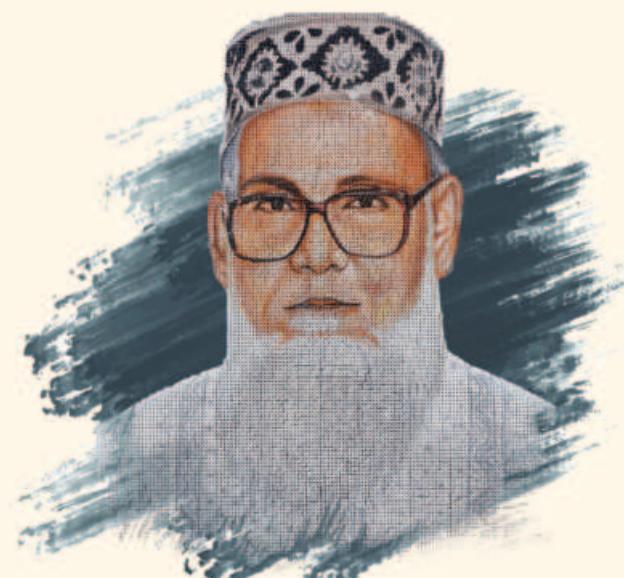
The day's programmes in the capital began with a 31 gun salute, followed by solemn tributes at the National Memorial in Savar, where President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus laid wreaths in honour of the fallen heroes.

People from all walks of life, including freedom fighters and their families, foreign diplomats stationed in Bangladesh, and members of various political and social organisations, also paid tributes to the martyrs at the monument.

To mark the country's 54 years of independence, 54 paratroopers from the Bangladesh Army, Navy and Air

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

IMMORTAL IN LOVE & RESPECT



Alhaj S M Nazrul Islam
(1928-2017)
Founder Chairman, Walton Group

Alhaj S M Nazrul Islam, Founder Chairman, Walton Group and Pioneer of Electrical & Electronics Industry in Bangladesh inspired us with his ethics, values and morals. May Allah grant Jannah to his departed soul, Ameen.



'Pray for Khaleda's early recovery'
Fakhrul urges nation on Victory Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia remains in critical condition in the intensive care unit of Evercare Hospital in Dhaka, where she has been receiving treatment for the last 23 days.

The former prime minister has been placed on electric ventilator support to rest her lungs and other organs, her doctors said.

The BNP Media Cell last night said her condition remains unchanged.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday sought prayers for Khaleda's recovery, describing her as the first female freedom fighter and a tireless guardian of democracy who has fought relentlessly for independence and sovereignty.

He said the BNP chief is now seriously ill and urged people to pray for her recovery.

Khaleda has developed several additional complications, including ineffective endocarditis, acute pancreatitis and severe bacterial and fungal infections.

A new system

FROM PAGE 1

Shafiqur said the struggle would continue until a youth-led new Bangladesh is realised.

"No matter how many obstacles or threats come, we will not stop. We will build a new Bangladesh in line with the nation's aspirations," he said.

The marathon began around 8:00am at Suhrawardy Uddyan and ended at Manik Mia Avenue near the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, passing through Shahbagh and Science Lab. Participants carried national flags and colourful banners and wore caps, reports UNB.

Referring to the upcoming election, the Jamaat chief warned against manipulation.

"We do not seek any favour from the Election Commission, but any bias will not be tolerated," he said, adding that attempts to buy votes with black money would fail as people are now more aware.

He also said that the people of the then East Pakistan revolted in 1971 against injustice and discrimination by the Pakistani ruling elite.

Shafiqur said the nation rose against the Awami League's 15-year long rule last year because of the party's widespread oppression.

He further alleged that the party is now targeting youths and revolutionaries, citing an attempt on the life of Osman Hadi, a key leader of the July movement.

"If anything happens to Osman Hadi, the revolutionaries will not remain silent," the Jamaat chief said.

He added that eliminating a few leaders would not weaken the movement. "The number of revolutionaries will only continue to grow," he said.

'Enemies of independence'

FROM PAGE 1

"That is why this day is extremely important for us and for the BNP," he said.

On behalf of the party, its Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman paid respect and gratitude to the martyrs of the Liberation War, he said.

Talking to reporters, Fakhrul said Tarique is still living abroad in exile, but the party hopes he will return home on December 25.

"We are working so that his return further strengthens the struggle for democracy," he said.

Earlier in the morning, BNP leaders and activists, led by Mirza Abbas, paid tributes to the martyrs by placing wreaths at the National Memorial in Savar.

Talking to reporters, Abbas questioned the glorification of former Jamaat-e-Islami ameer Ghulam Azam and his associates, saying such narratives insult the country's freedom fighters.

"If Ghulam Azam and his associates are regarded as the best sons of the nation, then the brave freedom fighters are being insulted," he said, asking where the freedom fighters' position then stands.

"I would like to know this from them," he added.

Referring to Jamaat, Abbas said the party has never wished peace for the country since 1947.

"From 1947 to 1971, they did not want the country's independence, and they still do not want Bangladesh to be independent. They want the country to fall into crisis, to deteriorate, and to remain in turmoil," he said.

BNP Standing Committee members Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Abdul Moyeen Khan, Nazrul Islam Khan and Salahuddin Ahmed, among others, were present.

BNP and its associate bodies held programmes in different parts of the country to mark the day.



Indigenous farmers of Bandarban are seen processing a paddy variety locally known as "Lakcha". An integral part of the social life and cultural heritage of indigenous communities in the region, villagers work together by exchanging labour, with no financial motive, to preserve the paddy. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA

No one can stop our democratic progress

FROM PAGE 1

ousted power is desperately trying to rehabilitate itself before the polls with the support of a "friend."

"As long as their friends stand with them, they will continue to dream. Once the election is over, their friends will find it difficult to provide support. That is why there is such haste. They want to ensure their return before the election," he said.

He also assured the nation that the government is doing everything possible to support the treatment of three-time former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, adding that she has been declared a VVIP in recognition of her unwavering commitment and contribution to democracy.

Touching on the government's performance, Yunus said it has set three priorities -- accountability for the July uprising killings, fundamental reforms of the state structure to ensure an effective and accountable democratic transition, and a fair election.

He said an International Crimes Tribunal, through an independent, transparent and evidence-based judicial process, has sentenced deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina to death as the principal instigator of the indiscriminate killing of students, workers and the

general public.

He added that the government has formally requested India to return Hasina and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan, who fled after the uprising.

On reforms, Yunus said several institutional and structural changes have already been completed, with dozens of old laws amended and a number of new ones enacted. He described the July National Charter as the biggest reform, issued as an order to ensure fundamental constitutional changes.

He said a separate secretariat has been created for the judiciary to ensure administrative independence, and the Police Commission Ordinance 2025 has been adopted to restore public confidence.

He also said that the interim government has promulgated the National Human Rights Commission Ordinance 2025 to revive the body, which had remained dormant under fascist rule.

Yunus said holding the referendum on the July charter alongside the parliamentary election would be a historic moment in determining the country's future roadmap.

"What kind of state we expect will depend on the outcome of the referendum. Through this vote, the character, structure and pace of

progress of the new Bangladesh will be decided," he said.

He informed the nation that all preparations for the twin vote on February 12 have been finalised and that the government is providing full cooperation to the Election Commission.

"We want this election to be truly festive, participatory, peaceful and, above all, fair. We are committed to taking all necessary measures to organise an acceptable election," he said.

He called on leaders of all political parties to act responsibly and view one another as competitors, not enemies.

"Create such a fair, acceptable and peaceful electoral environment that the people gain greater confidence in the democratic process," he said.

Urging citizens to remain vigilant, Yunus said, "If anyone creates obstruction, resist them in a disciplined manner and seek the assistance of law enforcement agencies."

He concluded by reminding people that the ownership of the country lies in their hands and that "your vote is the signature of that ownership."

"Your vote will determine which path the state will take, how the administration will be reorganised and what form the new Bangladesh will assume," he added.

'I will go'

FROM PAGE 12

Sector 11 and later worked with allied forces, carrying out reconnaissance, serving as an interpreter, and taking part in direct combat.

But his most defining moment came at Kamalpur.

"Kamalpur, a heavily fortified Pakistani base, was known as the gateway to Dhaka from the northern region. Capturing it was a major objective for the Mukti Bahini.

"In the last week of November, freedom fighters surrounded Kamalpur. Pakistani soldiers remained besieged for 11 consecutive days. Gradually, food and ammunition ran out. Eventually, only one option remained -- surrender."

But the Pakistani forces were unwilling. "It was then decided that a letter would be sent to the Pakistani troops, urging them to surrender."

On December 3, Brigadier Hardev Singh Clare then lined up the fighters and asked, "Who will go to enter the camp with the letter?"

Hundreds of fighters were present but none spoke, until the teenager volunteered.

With a white flag in one hand and the letter in the other, Bashir walked towards the Kamalpur camp. An open field lay ahead, reeking of death and gunpowder.

For nearly half an hour, he called

out, but no Pakistani soldier came forward. Instead, they gestured for him to enter the camp.

Proving his resolve yet again, he walked ahead.

To his surprise, he was not killed immediately. A Pakistani officer approached him and said, "Mukti, tumi mat ghabrao." (Freedom fighter, do not



Bashir Ahmed Bir Protik

be afraid.) Bashir was given food and protection.

Meanwhile, assuming he had been killed, the freedom fighters launched air strikes, and another teenage fighter, Anisul Haque Sanju, went to the camp with a second letter just hours later.

The pressure intensified before

Pakistani morale collapsed -- Captain Ahsan Malik agreed to surrender.

Thus, by that evening, came the first surrender of Pakistani forces in the Mymensingh region, as over 150 soldiers and collaborators laid down their arms.

Since then, December 4 has been observed as "Kamalpur Mukti Dibosh" (Kamalpur Freedom Day).

Recalling Bashir's courage, Bakshiganj Upazila Freedom Fighters' Commander Naoshed Ali said, "Bashir Ahmed was the bravest among us. When no one dared to carry the letter, he alone volunteered and took it to the camp."

On Victory Day, Bir Protik Bashir Ahmed said, "In the narrative being created now, with the movement of 24 highlighted above all else, those of us who took part in the Liberation War -- we seem to no longer exist."

"The aspirations with which we fought don't seem to exist either. We wanted a free country, where we could move freely, speak freely, and eradicate hunger -- but none of these have happened."

With a heavy heart but spirit of '71 still intact, he said, "We freed this country through immense suffering so it could become hunger-free and poverty-free -- I hope the new generation carries the same aspirations. This is my call to them."

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enriched," he said.

He said the mass uprising and revolution of 2024 were organised against that fascism, and that his party sees itself as the successor to the historic struggles of the Bengali people from 1947 to 1971 and from 1971 to 2024.

"We want to build the future Bangladesh by embracing that struggle," he said.

Bashir further alleged that "fallen and fascist forces" are trying to destabilise the country and sabotage the elections.

He also criticised the authorities for failing to arrest those involved in the attempted killing of Sharif Osman Hadi, saying those who opened fire have yet to be brought to justice.

Extending Victory Day greetings, Nahid said Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation on December 16, 1971 through the surrender of the Pakistani occupying forces.

"The people of this land have fought for freedom, human dignity and sovereignty for ages," he said, adding that the youth, common people and farmers played a central role in the Liberation War.

Nahid, however, said despite independence, the people of Bangladesh have been repeatedly deceived over the past 54 years.

"We could not build the country according to the promises of the Liberation War. Neither equality, nor human dignity, nor social justice were established. Instead, fascism was

entrenched," he said.

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Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus lays a wreath at the National Memorial in Savar, Dhaka, paying tribute to the martyrs of the 1971 Liberation War on the occasion of Victory Day yesterday. People from all walks of life, along with political leaders and activists, joined the nationwide celebrations.

PHOTO: CA'S PRESS WING, PRABIR DAS, PALASH KHAN



Students observe Victory Day across campuses

STAR REPORT

The authorities of Dhaka University, Jagannath University, Chittagong University, Jahangirnagar University, Rajshahi University, Islamic University, and several other institutions observed Victory Day yesterday through a series of programmes.

At DU, student-based cultural organisations jointly organised 'Rokte Ranga Bijoy Amar' at the TSC, featuring cultural performances, music, and fireworks. The national flag was hoisted at the vice chancellor's building and other key facilities.

Teachers, students, officers and staffers, led by VC Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan, paid floral tributes at the National Memorial in Savar.

At JU, VC Prof Mohammad Kamrul Ahsan, along with senior officials, also paid tribute to the memorial. A Vice-Chancellor Cup Women's Handball Tournament was held at the central playground, followed by cultural programmes at Selim Al Deen Mukta Mancha. Juesu also organised a victory rally and a Liberation War-themed art

competition.

At RU, a discussion was held at the senate building and honoured freedom fighters, while Rucusu paid tribute at the Shaheed Minar and organised cultural programmes on the campus.

At CU, the authorities held rallies and laid wreaths. They also organised discussions, cultural programmes, and inter-department games.

Meanwhile, students of different public universities -- including DU, JU, CU, JU and RU -- staged protests denouncing collaborators and war crimes convicts, with symbolic acts such as hurling shoes and rubbish at their portraits painted on the campuses.

Students said the actions were aimed at opposing what they described as sustained attempts to rehabilitate anti-liberation forces and their ideology.

At DU, a group of students hurled shoes at a photograph of Ghulam Azam, a convicted war criminal, in front of the Ducusu building. They also chanted slogans denouncing collaborators of the Pakistani occupation forces during the 1971 Liberation War.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Ensure justice for Hadi's shooting: NCP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party (NCP) held a march against violence yesterday, marking Victory Day and demanding justice for the shooting of Sharif Osman Hadi.

Leaders and activists marched from Bangla Motor to Shaheed Minar and back, chanting slogans and carrying placards that read "We are Hadi," "We will not let Hadi's blood go in vain," and "We will fight against violence together."

In their march, NCP carried photos of five national leaders: Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Abul Hashim, and Jogendra Nath Mandal.

At Shahbag, they briefly stopped for a rally where NCP Senior Joint Member Secretary Tasnim Jara said the shooting of a candidate in broad daylight, just a day

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



A farmer prepares a tree before attaching a jar to collect date juice. This is the prime season for harvesting the precious syrup. The photo was taken in the Fatepur area of Chittagong, yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHR UDDIN

Preparations on to make Tarique's homecoming memorable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP is preparing to make the return of its Acting Chairman Tarique Rahim a memorable event, aiming to build momentum ahead of the national election, party leaders said.

The party plans to place Tarique's return at the centre of political discourse and mobilise leaders, activists and supporters across the country.

On the day of his arrival, BNP is likely to hold a large showdown in the capital, with a large number of supporters expected to gather to welcome him, party sources said.

Senior BNP leaders believe Tarique's return will strengthen the party, energise its grassroots and help ease internal tensions over nominations ahead of the polls.

These issues were discussed at a meeting of the BNP Standing Committee at the party chairperson's office in Gulshan on Monday night. Tarique presided over the meeting virtually from London.

Tarique is scheduled to arrive at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 10:00am on December 25 on a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight from the United Kingdom.

After completing immigration formalities, he will leave the airport around 11:00am and proceed to house number 196 on Gulshan Avenue, party sources said.

A senior BNP leader said the aircraft carrying Tarique would first land at Sylhet airport before flying to Dhaka. "Instructions have been given so that no party leaders or activists gather at Sylhet airport," the leader said.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

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Tribute paid to 1971 war heroes in Ctg

CCC accords reception to 110 freedom fighters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Chattogram*

People from all walks of life in Chattogram paid tribute to the martyrs who laid down their lives for the motherland, marking Victory Day.

The observances began at sunrise yesterday with a 31-gun salute at the Liberation War Memorial.

Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) Mayor Shahadat Hossain was the first to lay a wreath at the martyr's monument.

He was followed by divisional and city dignitaries, including Divisional Commissioner Dr Md Ziauddin, Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Zahidul Islam Mia, Chattogram Metropolitan Police Commissioner Hasib Aziz, Chattogram Range DIG Md Ahsan Habib Palash, and Chattogram Superintendent of Police Md Nazir Ahmed Khan.

The freedom fighters risked their lives to free the country. To protect the sovereignty of this independent nation, everyone must remain united.

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN, CCC Mayor

Later, people from various segments of society paid their respects by placing flowers at the monument. Attendees carried banners, placards, and the red-and-green flag of Bangladesh, uniting in a single confluence of respect. Freedom fighters and representatives from political parties, social, and cultural organisations also offered their tributes.

In the morning, the city corporation organised a reception ceremony at the Theatre Institute Chattogram to honour 110 freedom fighters currently living in the district.

Mayor Shahadat Hossain handed over crests, certificates of honour, and financial stipends to freedom fighters and the families of those who sacrificed their lives in the 1971 Liberation War.

In his address as the chief guest, Mayor Shahadat said, "The valiant freedom fighters are the nation's finest children. We attained an independent Bangladesh through their sacrifice. We are proud and delighted to host this reception today."

"The Liberation War of 1971 was fought with a dream of establishing equality, justice, human dignity, and democracy. The freedom fighters never thought of stipends or personal gain. They risked their lives to free the country. To protect the sovereignty of this independent nation, everyone must remain united."



PHOTO: STAR

Illegal brick kilns run in Bandarban despite ban

MONG SING HAI MARMA

Despite government restrictions, a clear High Court directive, and repeated raids by the district administration and the Department of Environment, furnaces of illegal brick kilns in Bandarban flare back to life soon after enforcement teams leave after conducting drives.

Locals alleged new brick kilns are still being run by cutting hills and burning forest wood as fuel, ignoring the ban.

The DoE said some illegal kiln owners have even attempted to attack government inspection teams.

According to the DoE office, a total of 70 brick kilns operate in Bandarban.

All 11 kilns in Bandarban Sadar, one in Ruma, seven in Naikongchhari and 11 in Lama upazilas are currently shut down, but the rest are actively operational.

Md Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, DoE assistant director in Bandarban, said construction of illegal kilns, furnace preparation and raw brick-making have been going on secretly despite their drives.

Since July this year, seven mobile court drives led by the environmental court and the special magistrate's court in Lama's Faitong area fined 21 kilns a total of Tk 29.10 lakh, filed three cases and demolished eight illegal kilns, he added.

"However, the moment we leave, they resume operations," he said.

"We don't have our own manpower. We have to form teams comprising the district administration, UNOs, police and fire service. Drives often get delayed when supporting agencies are unavailable," the official added.

Bandarban Deputy Commissioner Shamim Ara Rini said all brick kilns in the hills are illegal as per the HC directive.



She said all UNOs have been directed to conduct immediate drives whenever they receive information that a kiln has restarted.

During a recent visit to Thanchi upazila, a brick kiln was found operating along the Thanchi-Alikadam road, just 500 metres from the upazila headquarters. The UNO office, two government institutions, including

a school, a Buddhist temple and an indigenous community's village, are located nearby.

Several students said the kiln's furnace had been burning for a week. Smoke continuously enters classrooms through windows, while dust from frequent truck movement also disrupts the academic environment, they added.

Chaw Shoi U Marma, headteacher of Mogk Para Government Primary School, said they raised the issue with the upazila education officer when the kiln started operating 10-12 years ago.

"No steps were taken. For the sake of our academic environment and students' health, shutting this kiln is essential," he said.

Local resident Aoung shoi U Marma, 60, said the smoke and dust have made daily life difficult.

Md Sarwar, manager of the brick kiln in Thanchi, said its owner, Md Sujon of Bandarban, went into hiding after the August 5 changeover last year.

His younger brother, Md Mehedi, instructed him to resume operations last week, he said. "I cannot say for sure whether the administration has given any approval."

Thanchi UNO Md Abdullah Al Foishal said the DoE has been informed about the illegal kiln and action will follow soon.

Parked bus catches fire in Cox's Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Cox's Bazar*

A bus caught fire while parked at a bus counter near the Police Lines, adjacent to the Cox's Bazar bus terminal, yesterday.

The fire broke out around 11:45am, triggering panic among locals and passers-by. Fire Service personnel rushed to the spot upon receiving the alert and managed to bring the blaze under control.

Mohammad Tanharul Islam, deputy assistant director of Cox's Bazar Fire Service and Civil Defence, confirmed the incident and said the cause of the fire



could not be determined immediately.

An investigation will be conducted to ascertain how the fire started, he added.

Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station Officer in Charge Sami Uddin said no casualties were reported. The driver was not inside the bus belonging to Doel Express at that time, and the helper, who was listening to music inside it, managed to get off, he added.

The fire is believed to have started accidentally, said the OC.

Although the exact cause remains unclear, some eyewitnesses speculated that the fire may have originated from a cigarette.

Students observe Victory Day

FROM PAGE 3

Speaking at the gathering, one student said Ghulam Azam and other Jamaat leaders had opposed Bangladesh's Liberation War, while their ideological successors are now portraying the war as an "Indian conspiracy".

"We have seen that this year the razakars have been portraying themselves as sons of the soil. We reject this with hatred," he added.

At JnU, a similar programme was held at the sculpture square, where students threw shoes at symbolic images and chanted anti-Pakistan and anti-razakar slogans.

Asif Hossain, a student of philosophy department, said, "Students were prevented by the university authorities from drawing and trampling the Pakistani flag as a mark of protest. Today's programme was organised in response."

Earlier, on Monday night, tension flared on the JnU campus over the allegation. In protest, the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists staged an overnight blockade of the VC's vehicle, witnesses said.

At JU, students from the drama and dramatics department threw garbage at an installation in front of the Old Arts Building named "Ghrinasthambha" (pillar of hatred), which depicted portraits of convicted war criminals

Ghulam Azam, Quader Molla and Motiur Rahman Nizami. The demonstration was held in protest against attempts to portray war collaborators -- razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams -- as "heroes", said

organisers.

Muntasir Billah Khan, a student of the department and general secretary of the Al-Beruni Hall unit of the JU students' council, said those who opposed the Liberation War have no place in the country.

At CU, portraits of Ghulam Azam and Pro-VC Prof Shamim Uddin Khan were drawn on the walkway Monday, but by yesterday morning had been painted over in black.

A student said they had painted the portraits as a symbolic protest against the pro-VC's derogatory remarks on martyred intellectuals, demanding his resignation.

Abdullah Al Noman, general secretary of CU unit of JCD, said those who did not uphold the spirit of the Liberation War and "sided with razakars" were responsible for smearing the portraits with black paint.

However, a group of CU 101 teachers, in a statement, said parts of a speech by CU Pro-VC (Academic) Prof Shamim Uddin Khan during a discussion marking Martyred Intellectuals Day are being circulated selectively, creating confusion.

At RU, JCD staged a shoe-hurling programme targeting symbolic representations of Razakars, Al-Badr and Al-Shams.

RU JCD president Sultan Ahmed Rahi said the collaborators of Pakistani forces were behind "the most despicable chapter" in Bangladesh's history. "Even today, those engaged in pro-Pakistan

Youth stabbed to death in Dhaka's Jatrabari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth was stabbed to death in Kajla area of Dhaka's Jatrabari last evening.

The victim was identified as Faruk, 18, a mason by profession.

The incident occurred around 5:45pm in the Nayangan area of Kajla. Locals rescued Faruk in critical condition and rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where doctors declared him dead around 6:45pm.

Mohammad Sajib, who took Faruk to the hospital, said, "Shortly before the incident, we saw 10 to 15 youths stabbing Faruk indiscriminately in an alley beside Al-Falah Mosque in Nayangan. The attackers fled immediately after leaving him injured."

He added that they could not identify any of the assailants but suspected they might be from the same area. Confirming the death, Inspector Md Faruk, in charge of the DMCH police camp, said the body has been kept at the hospital morgue for autopsy.

JASHORE DISTRICT

Potters busy crafting pots for date juice

MOHSIN MILON, *Benapole*

As the winter approaches, potters in Jashore are busy crafting earthen pots used for collecting date juice and storing jaggery.

Raw date juice is a popular delicacy during winter mornings, while jaggery made from the juice is an essential ingredient in making traditional pitha varieties consumed in the season.

Visiting Dehati village in Jashore, this correspondent found the potters moulding, sun-drying and firing clay pots in kilns. Some pots were being meticulously adorned with elaborate patterns to maximise buyer appeal.

Nitai Pal, a potter from the village, said, "I make around 50-70 pots a day with the assistance of five to ten workers. The pots used for storing juice sell for Tk 30 each, while the ones for jaggery sell for Tk 40 each. We prepare these earthen pots from October to December and can earn around Tk 1.5-2 lakh."

Buyers, mainly date juice collectors from various areas, purchase the pots wholesale and retail," he added.

Worker Gopal Pal said he earns Tk 500-600 daily working from 6:00am to 1:00pm, while another worker, Anand Pal, who operates the kiln, earns Tk 700 800 a day.

Samaren Biswas, additional deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Jashore, said, "This year, juice will be collected from around 3,07,130 date palm trees in the district. Farmers and trained tappers have already started preparing the trees. From the juice collected, about 3,000 tonnes of jaggery are likely to be produced, generating roughly Tk 150 crore in income for local farmers."

The DAE estimates that 6,314 tappers will be involved in juice collection and jaggery production this season, directly benefiting around 16,000 farming families.

Samaren further noted that the government is providing assistance to date palm farmers to boost jaggery production.

Jashore Deputy Commissioner Md Azharul Islam said, "We are distributing new date palm seedlings to farmers every year..."

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Sudan general ready to talk to Trump for peace

AFP, Port Sudan

Sudan's de facto leader, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, is ready to work with US President Donald Trump to resolve the conflict splitting his country, the foreign ministry said yesterday.

The ministry released a statement after the army chief visited Riyadh as a guest of Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who presented Trump with a proposed peace plan during a Washington visit.

Burhan hailed Trump's "determination to engage in efforts to achieve peace and end the war in the country, with the participation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

"He affirmed Sudan's keenness to work with President Trump, his secretary of state, and his envoy for peace in Sudan to achieve this unquestionably noble goal," it said.

EASTERN PACIFIC US kills 8 in strikes on alleged drug boats

REUTERS, Washington

The US Southern Command said on Monday that it carried out strikes on three vessels in international waters, killing eight men.

"Intelligence confirmed that the vessels were transiting along known narco-trafficking routes in the Eastern Pacific and were engaged in narco-trafficking," the military said in a post on X.

The US struck more than 20 vessels in the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea near Venezuela as part of a military campaign President Donald Trump has launched on drug smuggling from the region.

At least 90 suspected drug smugglers have been killed in the process.

The Trump administration has sought to defend the legality of the strikes, which some legal experts have said amount to unlawful extrajudicial killings.

"Our operations in the Southcom region are lawful under both US and international law, with all actions in compliance with the Law of Armed Conflict," Pentagon Press Secretary Kingsley Wilson told reporters earlier this month.

Thousands of glaciers to melt each year by mid-century: study

AFP, Paris

Thousands of glaciers will vanish each year in the coming decades, leaving only a fraction standing by the end of the century unless global warming is curbed, a study showed on Monday.

Government action on climate change could determine whether the world loses 2,000 or 4,000 glaciers annually by the middle of the century, according to the research.

A few degrees could be the difference between preserving almost half of the world's glaciers in 2100 -- or fewer than 10 percent.

"Our results underscore the urgency of ambitious climate policy," said the study published in the journal *Nature Climate Change* and led by glaciologist Lander Van Tricht.

Researchers usually focus on the loss of mass and area of the world's ice giants, but Van Tricht and his colleagues set out to determine how many individual glaciers could melt away annually in this century.

While the melting of smaller individual glaciers may have less impact on sea-level rise than larger ones, their loss can significantly harm tourism or local culture, the scientists said.

The disappearance of each single glacier can have major local impacts, even if its meltwater contribution is small," Van Tricht from ETH Zurich and Vrije Universiteit Brussel, told reporters.

Co-author Matthias Huss, also a glaciologist at ETH Zurich, took part in 2019 in a symbolic funeral for the Pizol glacier in the Swiss Alps.



Rescuers work at the site of an apartment building hit by a Russian drone strike, amid ongoing attacks, in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, yesterday. Europe launched an International Claims Commission for Ukraine in an effort to ensure Kyiv is compensated for hundreds of billions of dollars in damage from Russian attacks and alleged war crimes.

PHOTO: REUTERS

FIGHTING ALONG CONTESTED BORDER Cambodia must announce truce 'first'

Says Thailand, works to repatriate thousands stranded at the border crossing

AGENCIES

Thailand said yesterday that Cambodia must be first to announce a truce to halt fighting between the two nations after more than a week of deadly clashes in a reignited border conflict.

"As the aggressor onto Thai territory, Cambodia must announce the ceasefire first," Thai foreign ministry spokeswoman Maratee Nalita Andamo told reporters in Bangkok, adding that Cambodia must also cooperate in de-mining efforts at the border "sincerely".

Renewed fighting between the Southeast Asian neighbours this month has killed at least 32 people, including soldiers and civilians, and displaced around 80,000, officials said.

Each side has blamed the other for instigating the clashes, claiming self-defence and trading accusations of attacks on civilians. Cambodia did not immediately respond to Thailand's statement.

Meanwhile, Thailand is working out how to repatriate up to 6,000 citizens unable to return home through the major border crossing in Cambodia, reports Reuters.

US President Donald Trump, who intervened in the border conflict earlier this year, last week claimed the two countries had



Displaced people eat dinner at a temporary shelter in Thailand's Buriram province yesterday, amid clashes with Cambodia along a disputed border area.

PHOTO: REUTERS

agreed to a ceasefire beginning Saturday night.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet said his country supported the ceasefire initiative of Malaysia, chair of the Asean regional bloc, with Washington's participation, reports AFP.

But fighting has continued daily since December 7, spreading to seven provinces on each side of the border, and Bangkok denied Trump's claim of an agreed truce.

Cambodia, which is outgunned and outspent by Bangkok's military, said Monday that Thai

forces had expanded their attack "deep into" Cambodian territory.

Phnom Penh accused Thai forces of bombing Siem Reap province, home to the centuries-old Angkor temples -- the country's top tourist draw -- for the first time in the latest round of clashes.

The fighting, with artillery, tanks and Thai jets, has killed 16 Thai soldiers, one Thai civilian and 15 Cambodian civilians, according to officials. Phnom Penh had not reported any military deaths in the latest round of fighting.

COUP ATTEMPT

Benin jails around 30 people, mostly soldiers

AFP, Cotonou

Benin yesterday jailed around 30 people, most of them soldiers, accused of links to a thwarted coup attempt earlier this month, legal sources told AFP.

Soldiers appeared on national television on December 7 to announce President Patrice Talon had been deposed but the attempted putsch was swiftly defeated by loyalist army forces with the help of the Nigerian air force and French special forces.

Several people were killed and the alleged coup leader lieutenant-colonel Pascal Tigri and other mutinous soldiers are still on the run.

On Monday, the around 30 accused appeared in front of a special prosecutor for the court for economic crimes and terrorism in the city of Cotonou, the sources said.

They were placed in pre-trial detention the following day at the end of their hearing, they added.

They are being prosecuted for "treason", "murder" and "endangering state security", the sources said.

A heavy security deployment could be seen around the court, an AFP journalist saw.

Pentagon prepares major military reorganisation plan Washington Post reports

AFP, Washington

US officials are working on a plan for a reorganization of the military requested by Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth that would reduce four-star generals and consolidate some international command centers, the Washington Post reported on Monday.

If adopted, the proposal would mark one of the most significant changes at the military's top ranks in decades, the newspaper reported, citing five sources familiar with the matter.

US Joint Chiefs Chairman Dan Caine was expected to present the plan to Hegseth in coming days, a senior defense official familiar with the discussion told the Washington Post.

A spokesperson for the Pentagon did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment.

Under the plan, officials would "reduce the prominence" of the US Central Command, US European Command and US Africa Command and put them under control of a new organization known as US International Command, the newspaper reported.

It added it would also cut the number of generals and admirals who report directly to Hegseth.

The changes would have to be approved by both the Pentagon chief and US President Donald Trump to have any effect.

Honduras police disperse election protest, 8 hurt

AFP, Tegucigalpa

At least eight people were injured yesterday when police broke up a demonstration by leftist protesters demanding release of final results from Honduras's election, authorities said.

Outgoing President Xiomara Castro condemned the operation in which protesters from her party were removed from a camp set up in front of the National Electoral Council building.

Images shared on social media showed a man with a bloodied face, as well as tents, mattresses, and other objects scattered on the ground.

Tegucigalpa Mayor Jorge Aldana told AFP that eight people had been injured but were recovering. "They treated us like criminals," Aldana said.

The Central American country has not yet certified results from the November 30 election in which Nasry Asfura, a 67-year-old right-wing businessman backed by US President Donald Trump, holds a razor-thin lead over Salvador Nasralla, a 72-year-old fellow conservative.

Castro has accused Trump of election interference and the candidate from her leftist camp, Rixi Moncada, has called for the election to be annulled.

The latest preliminary results show Asfura in the lead with 40.54 percent of the vote, about 43,000 votes ahead of the center-right Nasralla, who has 39.19 percent of the vote.

Trailing far behind in third place with 19.29 percent of the vote is Rixi Moncada, of the ruling leftist LIBRE party. The tally sheets to be reviewed in the special hand count could easily flip the result standings of the two frontrunners. While voting on election day itself was calm, the subsequent process of tallying and reporting the ballots has been marred by chaos and confusion.



Jana Poczobut, right, daughter of imprisoned journalist Polish-Belarusian Andrzej Poczobut, and Irma Dimitradze, left, representative of imprisoned Georgian journalist Mzia Amaglobeli, pose with European Parliament President Roberta Metsola after the award ceremony for the 2025 Sakharov human rights prize at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France, yesterday.

Nepal starts tiger census to track recovery

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal yesterday launched a nationwide tiger census, a key step in conservation efforts to aid the recovery of the big cats that once faced near extinction in the Himalayan nation.

The survey will be conducted in four national parks in Nepal's forested southern plains, covering more than 8,000 square kilometres of protected areas and adjoining forests, officials said.

More than 2,300 motion-sensitive camera traps will be deployed, with over 250 conservation staff mobilised for the operation covering the Chitwan, Banke, Bardia and Shuklaphanta national parks.

Results are expected by July 2026. Haribhadra Acharya, coordinator of the National Tiger Census Technical Committee, said cameras helped scientists isolate individual animals with their unique stripe.

Gun licences for candidates?

It signals the state's failure, not people's safety

It is shocking and deeply regrettable that the interim government has taken a callous decision tantamount to abdicating its constitutional duty to ensure the security of all citizens. By allowing individuals deemed politically important and candidates contesting the national election to arm themselves, the government is effectively shifting its responsibility onto those it is meant to protect. While security agencies may issue advisories or safety guidelines in situations where there is a risk of a breakdown in law and order or civil unrest, the state cannot simply ask citizens—whether politically prominent candidates or ordinary voters—to purchase their own protection when their lives and property are under threat.

Amid growing concerns over candidates' safety following the assassination attempt on Sharif Osman Hadi, a leader of the July uprising and independent candidate in the upcoming elections, the Ministry of Home Affairs on Monday issued a circular announcing a revised gun-licensing policy. Under this policy, individuals classified as politically important and candidates in the parliamentary elections may be granted licences to carry firearms based on security and threat assessments. The policy also allows a licensee's appointed representative, described as a retainer, to carry the firearm if the licensee is unable to do so.

This is a misguided policy, seemingly adopted without due consideration of its far-reaching consequences. First, it sends a troubling signal to voters that the government lacks the capacity to ensure security during the electoral process. Such a perception risks undermining public confidence and discouraging voter participation.

Second, the circumstances surrounding the attack on Hadi reveal that his assailants had gained easy access to him well before the attack, eventually blending into his campaign team. This demonstrates how, during electioneering, would-be attackers can exploit proximity and trust by posing as loyal supporters. Rather than enhancing candidates' safety, the provision allowing firearms to be carried by retainers may actually create opportunities for infiltration and facilitate acts of violence.

Third, promoting a culture of personal gun ownership for political security is alien to our society and traditions. It risks further degrading an already fragile political environment and discourages the culture of tolerance and restraint that is essential for a successful democratic transition.

Official statistics show that the previous Awami League government issued 17,264 firearms licences over its 15 years in power. Given the current volatility and toxicity of our politics, this highly anticipated election is likely to attract a record number of candidates and, consequently, unprecedented demand for firearms. It is unrealistic to expect licensed gun sellers to meet such demand. In this context, the proliferation of illegal firearms becomes a real risk, posing grave dangers to public safety. Moreover, the costs associated with purchasing firearms and hiring retainers would impose an additional financial burden on candidates, potentially pushing them beyond legally prescribed campaign spending limits.

We strongly urge the government to scrap this policy and instead fulfil its obligation to provide security to those genuinely at risk. Ensuring the safety of candidates based on intelligence-led threat assessments is essential, but this responsibility must remain with the state and not be outsourced to those most vulnerable.

Make Bagerhat District Hospital fully functional

Recruit doctors and staff, operationalise ICU

Our healthcare sector is in complete disarray, with many district- and upazila-level hospitals facing serious gaps in patient care. While upazila health complexes are largely unable to provide essential services to rural patients, district-level hospitals are also often in poor shape, with critical care services absent in many of them. The 250 bed Bagerhat District Hospital is one such facility. According to a report in this daily, the hospital's Intensive Care Unit (ICU) has remained non-operational for nearly 11 months, despite being fully equipped. This hospital is the only major public healthcare facility for almost 20 lakh people in the district, yet critically ill patients are being denied life-saving care.

The 10-bed ICU has ventilators, cardiac monitors, infusion pumps, a defibrillator, a blood gas analyser, and oxygen therapy systems. Yet the unit has remained locked since December 2024 following the withdrawal of project-based staff. As a result, critically ill patients are referred to Khulna or Dhaka, increasing treatment costs and health risks. Prolonged disuse also risks damage to equipment.

Equally disappointing is the failure to utilise a Tk 38.28 lakh automatic biochemical analyser supplied by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) in March 2023. Capable of conducting dozens of advanced tests and processing hundreds of samples per hour, the machine has been lying idle due to the lack of installation support from the supplier. Consequently, more than 6,000 patients who seek pathological services at the hospital every month are being deprived of affordable diagnostic tests and are forced to turn to private facilities at a higher cost.

An acute manpower crisis is reportedly at the root of these problems. The hospital currently has only 26 doctors against 59 sanctioned posts, far below the requirement to operate the ICU and other specialised services. This exposes a persistent flaw: infrastructure and equipment are procured without ensuring the human resources and operational planning needed to keep services running.

We urge the health ministry and the DGHS to take immediate steps to restore ICU services at Bagerhat District Hospital by recruiting the required number of doctors, nurses, and support staff. In future, healthcare projects must be planned and implemented comprehensively, with guaranteed staffing and operational sustainability. Public hospitals cannot serve their purpose if life-saving facilities and equipment, procured with public money, lie idle while patients continue to suffer.

EDITORIAL

Mischiefous manipulation of established historical facts

WINKERS AWEIGH

Tanim Ahmed

is digital editor at The Daily Star.



TANIM AHMED

Our victory celebrations always come with a tinge of sadness as we mark the Martyred Intellectuals Day on December 14 to remember the brightest sons and daughters of this soil who were taken away from their homes, never to return. But even as we celebrate Victory Day, 54 years after Bangladesh's birth, there are blatant attempts to contrive and concoct historical narratives to absolve certain quarters of their treason.

With their new-found currency in the post 2024 dispensation, some Jamaat-e-Islami leaders are seeking to reverse a well-established narrative and turn it on its head. On December 14, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar claimed it was India who had conspired to kill the intellectuals. He claimed it was "part of a well-planned plot by the Indian army and Indian intelligence agencies."

Muhammad Nazrul Islam, Jamaat's Chattogram city chief, echoed Porwar, saying that "...someone else used the name of the Pakistan army to carry out the killings. India's name comes up first among the suspects. Those who did not go to India incurred India's wrath."

Such a narrative to exonerate the axis of forces, which unleashed nine months of untold brutality on our men, women and children, is preposterous. What is even more ludicrous is to blame the very army that came to our aid and helped us in the war against the Pakistanis. Such claims, outlandish as they are, will hardly absolve the Pakistani army or the razakars and Al Badr of genocide in Bangladesh.

There have been dozens of witnesses testifying how Al Badr, a vigilante militia group comprising Jamaat's then-student wing, Islami Chhatra Sangha members, had abducted professors and artists to execute them. Here are just a few to refresh our memories.

Shumon Zahid testified in 2013 that his uncle had identified Chowdhury Mueen Uddin, an Al Badr operative, who picked up his mother, Selina Parvin, on December 13, 1971.

The Daily Star reported on July 22, 2013, what Shumon had said in his testimony. He and one of his maternal uncles were present when his mother was taken, he said. This uncle later identified Mueen Uddin as one of the abductors from newspaper photos. He said Selina had become the target of Al Badr, as many pro-liberation writers used to write in her weekly *Sheelalipi*.

He and his uncle, Uzir, were on the roof of their house on New Circular Road at around 1:30pm on December

13. Suddenly, a number of vehicles appeared. There was a jeep, a microbus spattered with mud, and a military truck, said Shumon.

Strangers bearing guns knocked on Selina's door and asked her to go to the secretariat with them, but she refused as she did not have a curfew pass. They said it would not matter, said Shumon.

"Keeping her hand on my head, my mother said, 'Shumon, take your lunch with your uncle. I will come back in a few minutes.' This was my mother's last words to me," testified Shumon in court.

But one need not dig up court



125 Slain in Dacca Area
Believed Elite of Bengal



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

records to find these testimonies. They are so abundant that even The Daily Star's archives will yield dozens of such anecdotes with a cursory search.

For instance, Nusrat Rabbee wrote in this newspaper on December 16, 2005, how her mother had agonised over her father, Dr Mohammed Fazle Rabbee's, abduction. "Where are you taking him? Why are you taking him?" was all she could say to the soldiers before fainting on the balcony of their house around 4pm on December 15.

The abductors had given the false pretext of a critically ill patient in the cantonment. A renowned cardiologist with international acclaim, Dr Fazle Rabbee, went with them, only to never return.

Another piece, titled "The Spirit of Shaheed Munier Choudhury," published just two days ago on December 14,

Published with the dateline of December 18, the report states that all the victims' hands were tied behind their backs and "they had been bayoneted, garrotted, or shot."

"They were among an estimated 300 Bengali intellectuals who had been seized by West Pakistani soldiers and locally recruited supporters. Razakar (pro-Pakistani) irregulars had apparently held the victims as 'hostages' for fair surrender terms. They appeared to have been killed just before Pakistani commanders in the East surrendered two days ago," reads the despatch from Dhaka.

According to the report, even two days after Pakistan's surrender, there were pockets of resistance around Rayerbazar. The razakars were reportedly still holding out in a factory and they took part in a fight with an

Sangha in 1971, Motiur Rahman Nizami (later the head of Jamaat) was also the head of the Al Badr militia group, which executed the blueprint for executing our intellectuals. Ghulam Azam, Jamaat guru, was responsible for Jamaat's role during the Liberation War.

The razakar, Al Badr, Al Shams and similar groups, who collaborated with the Pakistani army, will always be remembered for their sinister role during 1971 and this ongoing attempt to recast villains as victims will hardly absolve them.

Every such attempt is not merely an exercise in manipulating history but an assault on our memory. If we remain silent to this indignity to our martyred intellectuals, we too will have become complicit with the traitors. It is all the more reason to revisit our history and strengthen our roots.

How data science can shape our financial future



AFSARA MALIHA HANNAN

Afsara Maliha Hannan
is a data scientist and assistant manager
(SME Credit) at City Bank PLC.

"Data is the new oil," a truth the world has embraced, but Bangladesh is still learning to harness its potential. From banks predicting loan defaults to democratising access to healthcare through telemedicine and health apps, the scope of data science across socio-economic and public sectors is vast.

Bangladesh is undergoing a rapid digital transformation, with over 13 crore internet users and one of the fastest growing mobile markets in South Asia. The rise of fintech and mobile financial services has accelerated financial inclusion, bringing millions of unbanked citizens into the formal economy. National initiatives, such as the Smart Bangladesh ICT Master Plan 2041, aim to build an inclusive, data-driven society through innovation and sustainable technological adoption.

Against this backdrop, integrating data science into the financial ecosystem can significantly enhance people's lives by strengthening financial inclusion, sustainability, and personalisation. Three areas in which data science can drive significant

advancement are: i) predictive analytics for fairer, faster, and more inclusive credit; ii) proactive risk management frameworks to enhance provisioning and prudent lending; and iii) personalised financial products and recommender systems to improve customer experience.

Traditional banking has long been burdened by bureaucracy and excessive paperwork, resulting in prolonged decision-making processes. However, data science enables banks and non-bank financial institutions to use predictive analytics to assess a wider range of indicators—such as transaction histories, digital payment frequency, and demographic data—to develop credit scoring models. This allows institutions to extend loans to clients previously considered "unbankable" due to poor credit history, lack of identification, or limited financial records.

A notable example of data science advancing financial inclusion is City Bank's partnership with bkash to automate nano loans through the bkash app. The same approach

can be extended to the agricultural sector. Predictive analytics based on crop yield, farmland productivity, and weather data can help design tailored agri-loans, strengthening rural finance, supporting farmers, and contributing to national food security.

Once credit is extended, responsible risk management becomes the next critical step. In finance, banks rely on loan provisioning to absorb the shock of defaults. Traditionally, classification-based provisioning requires banks to set aside provisions only after a default has occurred—the greater the impact, the higher the provision. This reactive approach responds only after the damage is done.

On the other hand, a proactive framework mandated under International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS) 9 is the Expected Credit Loss (ECL) model. Its core objective is to forecast defaults over the life of a loan, rather than recording losses after they occur. The model estimates three key components—probability of default (PD), exposure at default (EAD), and loss given default (LGD)—combined with macroeconomic scenarios. Data science lies at the heart of ECL modelling. The approach requires robust model governance, validation, and strong data infrastructure to connect every stage of the ECL lifecycle, from data cleaning and client-level modelling to default prediction and macroeconomic shock simulation. This transforms what was once a reactive accounting exercise into a proactive, data-driven

risk management system. As ECL implementation becomes a priority under Bangladesh Bank's regulatory roadmap, building data science capacity is imperative.

With inclusive and sustainable foundations in place, data-driven personalisation can further elevate customer experience and build meaningful relationships. Financial recommender systems rely on data science to understand customer behaviour, anticipate needs, and deliver tailored financial solutions. A prominent example is Nubank in Brazil, whose in-app intelligent suggestions notify users about bill payments and recommend savings schemes and relevant financial products based on transaction data. Such initiatives have positioned Nubank as a leader in digital banking by addressing individual financial needs.

However, unlocking the full potential of data science in finance requires stronger data infrastructure, improved data integration, and sustained investment in skilled analytics talent. Collaboration among financial institutions, fintech companies, and academia is also essential to foster innovation and combine expertise. Data empowers citizens to enhance financial literacy as they save, invest, and plan for secure futures. In Bangladesh's financial sector, the true power of data science lies not merely in faster decisions, but in fairer, safer, and smarter ones, advancing inclusion, sustainability, and personalisation simultaneously.



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MD MAHMUDUL HASAN

When I first heard about the desecration of Roquia Sakhawat Hossain, popularly known as Begum Rokeya, at Dhaka University in the aftermath of the July uprising, I paid it little attention, assuming it was a false flag operation aimed at discrediting the mass movement that ended an oppressive regime on August 5, 2024.

On the morning of November 11 this year, I delivered a speech on Begum Rokeya and Mary Wollstonecraft at my alma mater and former workplace, the Department of English at DU. While waiting for the event to begin, I was told that the defacing of Begum Rokeya's graffiti near Shamsun Nahar Hall in November last year had been a foolish act by an individual, not an organised attempt to malign Bangladesh's foremost woman writer. I later learned that a naive and ill-informed female student had committed the act, later apologised, and the matter was considered closed.

However, we are once again confronted with disruptive behaviour targeting Bangladesh's feminist icon. This time, it involved a university teacher. The individual, whose name matters little, defamed the devout Rokeya with preposterous accusations, seeking to portray her as an adversary of Islam.

Though nonsensical and presumably a publicity stunt, this attempt to sow dissonance between Rokeya and Islam has caused confusion about her religiosity. It struck me as a "mixed nuisance"—both a private and public irritant—affecting the wider public as well as me personally. As an academic who has studied and taught Begum Rokeya's works for decades, I can state with certainty that the university-affiliated critic's claims are the exact opposite of who she was.

Friends, both local and international, aware of my research interest in Begum Rokeya, continued to alert me to the controversy. I then came across a column by the editor of *The Daily Star*, titled "Bangladesh needs more dynamic Islamic discourse" (published on December 12, 2025), which touched on the issue. It suggested that the social media



FILE ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

distraction surrounding Begum Rokeya's stance on Islam had shifted from triviality to seriousness, prompting me to respond.

I first learned about Islam in depth from the late Shah Abdul Hannan (1939-2021), a scholar versed in both Islamic sciences and worldly matters. Before meeting him in November 1994, my understanding of Rokeya's perspective on Islam was vague. As a second year undergraduate, I attended Hannan's classes, where he discussed diverse scholarly debates on Islam. He devoted several sessions to examining Rokeya's work, presenting her as an Islamic reformist who

May 1931 essay, titled "Dhangshera Path Bangiya Muslim," which I later translated as "Bengal Muslims on the Way to Ruin" (2019). His discussion sparked my interest in her work, shaping my future research trajectory.

During my PhD in comparative literature at the University of Portsmouth (2007), I compared Rokeya's feminist ideas with those of Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, Atta Hossain, and Monica Ali. I have co-edited, jointly with Professor Mohammad A Quayum of Flinders University, and contributed to *A Feminist Foremother: Critical Essays on Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain* (2017). In addition

employed the framework of Islam to promote women's education and rights. For instance, in her presidential speech at the Bengal Women's Education Conference in 1926, she stated: "The person who spoke first for equal education for men and women is our Prophet. He made it compulsory for both men and women to acquire knowledge."

She added, "The opponents of women's education say that, if educated women become imprudent and obstinate. Woe to them! They call themselves Muslims but go against fundamental precepts of Islam. If men do not go astray obtaining education,

why will women?"

In *Motichur I*, Rokeya observes: "In Arab society, where women were oppressed and female infanticide was widespread, Prophet Muhammad liberated them.... Alas! It is because of his absence [absence of his teachings] among us that we [women] are in such a despicable plight!"

Her Islamic framework is further evident in her English essay "God Gives, Man Robs" (1911): "THERE is a saying, 'Man proposes, God disposes,' but my bitter experience shows that God gives, Man Robs.... Our great Prophet has said, 'Talibul Ilm farizatu 'ala kulli Muslimeen-o-Muslimat' (i.e., it is the bounden duty of all Muslim males and females to acquire knowledge). But our brothers will not give us our proper share in education."

I could cite many more examples to demonstrate Begum Rokeya's commitment to advancing women's rights within an Islamic framework. Regarding her critical remarks, often used to suggest tension between her and Islam, I have previously written: "In places where she appears critical of religious authorities, her actual targets are pseudo-religious people and texts."

Given her righteous lifestyle and innumerable affirmations of her faith, it is inconceivable that she would question the divine origin of Islam's primary texts. Her pointed critiques were directed at misogynistic texts written by self-styled custodians of Islam.

In "Dhangshera Path Bangiya Muslim," Rokeya notes that books such as *Rahe Najat* (Path to Salvation) and *Shonabhaner Puthi* promoted women's unquestioned obedience to men. In her essay "Griho" (Home), she cites passages instructing women: "Never utter a word even if your husband wants to kill you," and "Husband is woman's guide and crown/Worship your husband as you do your Guide."

In the introduction to *A Feminist Foremother*, Professor Quayum and I clarify that when Rokeya wrote, "These are nothing but written by men," she referred to "numerous cheap and popular texts written by misogynists, clad in counterfeit religious garb" that promoted female subservience. Begum Rokeya did not question the authority of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

A proverb says: "If someone says it's raining and another person says it's dry, it's not your job to quote them both. It's your job to look out the window and find out which is true." Begum Rokeya's entire oeuvre is modest in volume. Let us read it, re-evaluate her relationship with Islam, and see for ourselves who she truly was.

Rajuk's short-sighted DAP puts millions at risk in a major quake



After the recent earthquakes, Rajuk identified nearly 300 buildings as risky in the capital.

FILE PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Unplanned urbanisation, violations of the National Building Code and the Detailed Area Plan (DAP), and rampant filling of wetlands with sand for housing projects have made Dhaka the riskiest city in the country. Uncontrolled groundwater extraction and the rapid concretisation of the city—effectively halting the natural recharge of aquifers—have created massive underground voids, further increasing the risk. Narrow roads, non-resilient structural designs, and a lack of central control over gas and electricity distribution have made Dhaka a recipe for disaster in the event of a major earthquake.

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakka (Rajuk)'s survey under the Urban Resilience Project stated that a 6.9-magnitude earthquake originating from the Tangail's Madhupur fault would result in the destruction of 40 percent of buildings in Dhaka. Such findings are simply terrifying. According to media reports, after the recent earthquakes, Rajuk identified nearly 300 buildings in Dhaka as being at risk. Yet there is still no clarity on what steps have been taken following this identification. After coming to power, the interim government and Rajuk caved in to pressure from real estate companies and revised the DAP despite strong opposition from activists, academics and urban planners.

The revision now allows higher structures on narrower roads with inadequate essential services. If this series of earthquakes does not prompt a reconsideration of that decision, it is difficult to imagine what will.

Earthquakes are chaotic phenomena that do not depend on scale. Their unpredictability is precisely what makes them so destructive and life-threatening. One can never know for certain when or where they will strike. Even scientists at the United States Geological Survey (USGS) can only estimate the probability of a significant earthquake occurring in a specific area over a given period. The Bangladesh Meteorological Department reported four earthquakes of magnitude 4 or above in the past 30 days, all of which originated within the country. Among them, the 5.7-magnitude earthquake

originating in Madhabdi, Narsingdi, instilled fear and panic due to its shallowness and proximity to Dhaka. In addition to the Dawki fault and the Indo-Burma Megathrust, the recent discovery of another fault line within the country—capable of generating earthquakes of magnitude 6—should raise serious concerns about national disaster preparedness.

In 2010, a 7.0-magnitude earthquake in Haiti resulted in an estimated death toll of over three lakh, according to the Haitian government's official count. The primary reason for this staggering figure was the absence of an enforced building code. To this day, Haiti remains a grim example of how unregulated infrastructure can devastate

a city. By contrast, Japan—despite being one of the most seismically active countries in the world—has significantly reduced casualties and damage through rigorous building codes, sophisticated early-warning systems, nationwide drills and a culture of personal preparedness. This includes knowing evacuation routes, turning off gas supplies immediately, and using stairs instead of elevators.

Let us assume Dhaka adopted all these measures. Have we considered where people would evacuate to? Are there adequate public spaces in the city that could be used as temporary shelters or as bases for emergency rescue operations in such a crisis?

Public spaces, such as parks and

as access to water, communication points and clear layouts should be incorporated to support both immediate safety and long-term recovery. If real estate companies can acquire land and develop buildings in Dhaka, the government should be equally capable of acquiring land to create public spaces for a more resilient city. Such spaces are not only vital during emergencies; they also help foster a sense of community.

Earthquake drills in educational institutions, factories, office buildings and densely populated areas must be conducted regularly. Earthquake resilience must be ensured in every building, particularly in schools, factories and offices. Mandatory evacuation plans should be in place for each building, and residents must be familiar with them. Every neighbourhood should develop an emergency volunteer response team through community engagement. There has been considerable discussion about identifying buildings at risk; following such assessments, structures requiring retrofitting must be upgraded accordingly, while high-risk buildings should be dismantled safely.

In Bangladesh, authorities often wake up after a disaster, only to fall back into inaction once the issue fades from public attention. Rajuk cannot afford to wait for a catastrophe to strike. The government should roll back its decision to allow increased building heights on narrow roads through the latest DAP revision. We cannot allow the lives of millions to be endangered for the benefit of real estate interests.

Disaster management in Bangladesh has largely focused on specific regions, particularly coastal areas, and hazards such as floods and cyclones. Urban disaster preparedness, however, remains woefully inadequate. There are no specialised emergency response teams for earthquakes in the country. The Rana Plaza collapse in 2013 took 19 days to conclude rescue operations, and the failure of a single building exposed the severe lack of machinery, training and preparedness for such scenarios. This must change. Area-specific disaster management plans, grounded in proper risk assessments, are urgently needed. When it comes to earthquakes, it is not a question of if, but when. And when it happens, we must be prepared.

Films should provoke thought, not propaganda: IMTIAZ BARSHON



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Imtiaz Barshon has his hands full. His long-delayed web film *Ominangshito*, which had been stuck at the censor board for years, was finally released on December 15, while his upcoming film *Ekthane Rajnoitik Alap Joruri* is set to hit screens on December 26. Though the two films deal with different subjects, they share a common thread. Both urge the audience to think.

Speaking about the release of *Ominangshito*, Barshon said, "For a long time, it was hidden behind the scenes. At one point, I thought the film might never be released. But once it finally passed censorship, I started holding on to hope that it would be released someday, one way or another. And finally, it has been released this December, the month of Victory. That truly makes me very happy."

According to Barshon, *Ominangshito* offers more than just a story. It serves as food for thought. According to Barshon, "In Bangladesh, many cases remain unsolved for various reasons, sometimes due to political pressure, sometimes because of negligence in investigation, and at other times due to the absence of concrete clues despite sincere efforts. If a film like this can create even a small impact, provoke discussion, or prompt some response from the authorities regarding such unresolved or mysterious cases, then it will have achieved something meaningful. Barshon believes that in such a case, the pain and effort behind the film would feel worthwhile."

Talking about *Ekthane Rajnoitik Alap Joruri*, Barshon said the title itself initially drew him in. When he read the script, he discovered a narrative that brings together a wide range of political issues, tracing them back to even before the birth of Bangladesh. These are conversations we rarely see in cinema. While such debates may surface in private gatherings or informal discussions, they are

almost never portrayed on screen, particularly in Bangladeshi films.

For Barshon, this is particularly significant for the younger generation. There was a time when many young people believed engaging with politics was unintelligent or uncool. Yet it was these very individuals who stepped forward during the 2024 movement and turned it into a success. He believes this generation needs a deeper understanding of history and political discourse. From that perspective, *Ekthane Rajnoitik Alap Joruri* stands as meaningful content for all, offering entertainment, but genuine food for thought.

When asked about working on politically themed films and how he remains cautious, Barshon said, "For me, the key question is whether the content is politically correct. Whether what the screenwriter or filmmaker wants to say is truthful and responsible. If it is politically correct, I feel comfortable working on it. But if I feel that what is being said is not entirely true, then I might choose not to do the work."

Films dealing with political or cultural issues often risk turning into propaganda or becoming overwhelmed by slogans. Asked how filmmakers and actors can avoid this pitfall,

Barshon emphasised the conscious effort behind *Ekthane Rajnoitik Alap Joruri* to remain grounded in truth.

Reflecting on the challenges artists face amid growing political tension, Barshon said, "Politics is not something outside of you, me, or any of us. None of us are outside politics. Often, people in the creative world may not be indifferent, but they are not always vocal. They do not speak on every political issue. But when a country enters a period of crisis, when silence is no longer an option, when the government or administration becomes authoritarian and turns against the people, then standing on the side of justice becomes a responsibility for every artist, regardless of whether it brings threats or not."



ANGELINA JOLIE reveals mastectomy scars on Time France debut cover

NEWS

Fizz bags record IPL payday

FROM PAGE 12

Mustafizur played only one match for Sunrisers Hyderabad, Mumbai Indians, Rajasthan Royals, and the Chennai and Delhi franchises between 2016 and 2025.

With this price, Mustafizur also broke his own record. Last year, he was picked by Delhi for INR six crore as a replacement player.

He began his IPL journey in 2016 with Hyderabad, bought for INR 1.4 crore. He made an immediate impact, taking 17 wickets in 16 matches and playing a crucial role in Hyderabad's maiden IPL title. In the same year, he was adjudged the Emerging Player of the Tournament and remains the only foreign player to achieve this feat.

Mustafizur has revealed her mastectomy scars for the first time on the debut cover of Time France, marking a rare and deliberate act of public visibility. Photographed by Nathaniel Goldberg, the image shows the actor facing the camera in a low-cut top, her scars clearly visible.

"I share these scars with many women I love. And I'm always moved when I see other women share theirs," Jolie told the magazine. She previously

disclosed undergoing a preventive double mastectomy in 2013 after learning of a genetic cancer risk. Reaffirming her advocacy, Jolie stressed that access to cancer screening and healthcare should not depend on financial means or place of residence. She is also awaiting the release of *Coutures*, scheduled for French cinemas in February 2026.



Prime suspect hired car day before attack

FROM PAGE 12

Moncho wrote that the Dhaka 8 independent aspirant's condition had slightly deteriorated after preliminary tests. "But it has since stabilised," adding that another surgery is required, but his condition is not yet fit for it.

Nuruzzaman, hailing from Faridpur, runs a rent-a-car business and got acquainted with Faisal nine months ago, a DB officer involved in the investigation told this newspaper.

"Faisal has known Nuruzzaman for the last nine months and would occasionally hire cars through him to travel to Shatulia, where he has a female acquaintance."

"On the day of the incident, Faisal hired a car with the plan to travel from Matsya Bhaban around 11:00am. Accordingly, Nuruzzaman sent a car. However, when Faisal did not show up even by 1:00pm, the driver, Suman, contacted Nuruzzaman."

The officer, preferring anonymity, added, "When Nuruzzaman contacted Faisal, he said he would board the car from Agargaon. Shortly afterwards, he again changed the pickup point, saying he would get in from Aminbazar."

"When the driver reached Aminbazar around 4:00pm and contacted Faisal again, he then said he would board the car from Kalampur. Faisal and his associate then went from there to Mawna. He

So far, Mustafizur has played 60 IPL matches and taken 65 wickets. In T20s, he has played 126 matches for Bangladesh, picking up 158 wickets.

Alongside Mustafizur, Kolkata

also acquired Sri Lankan pacer Matheesa Pathirana (INR 18 crore)

and Australian all-rounder Cameron Green (INR 25.20 crore) from the mini auction.

Another Bangladeshi pacer, Taskin Ahmed, with a base price of INR 75 lakh, went unsold. Five more Bangladeshi players — leg spinner Rishad Hossain, left arm pacer Shariful Islam, left arm spinner Rabil Hasan, and right-arm pacers Nahid Rana and Tanzim Hasan Sakib — were listed but received no bids.

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LAW OPINION

Pre-nuptial agreements and protection of marital rights

APARAJITA DEBNATH

Courts and legal commentators in Bangladesh have repeatedly recognised that a clear set of conditions written in the kabin-nama carries contractual weight, and the family courts have repeatedly relied on kabin-nama entries (including Clause 17) when deciding on contentious issues.

Marriage is a promise and a legal relationship that creates rights and obligations between a couple. While months are spent on wedding planning, little consideration is given into planning the legal and financial obligations of the partners. As part of planning a happy conjugal life, a couple can sign a pre-nuptial agreement ('pre-nup' in short), where they may agree on specific terms beyond the mandatory requirements set by their respective religion/s. These terms may include maintenance arrangements, residence, work or education rights for the wife, restrictions on second marriage, delegation of divorce, property arrangements, or other mutually agreed upon obligations. Yet many couples shy away from finding the base conditions and making a pre-nup before marriage out of embarrassment, fear of upsetting family dynamics, or the mistaken belief that pre-nup is tantamount to pre-planning for divorce.

In Bangladesh, this hesitation is even more prominent. Couples, especially the young ones, feel uncomfortable discussing money, property, maintenance, or responsibilities before marriage. Families often discourage conversations on such serious matters out of fear that they will harm the relationship before it begins, identifying them as pessimistic thoughts. But the truth is, this silence breeds the very conflicts they fear. Absence of clarity in such matters often creates serious problems and even leads to divorce in the worst-case scenario. Disputes over maintenance, deferred dower, or residence may escalate into hostile litigation, often accompanied by harassment or false claims. By contrast, clearly drafted, lawful, and registered terms provide both spouses with certainty and help mitigate opportunistic claims.

Marriage under Islamic law is not merely a religious commitment but also a contract recognised by the statutory and Shariah law. A Muslim couple, hesitant to sign a pre-nup, can take advantage of the kabin-nama itself, which functions as evidence of the marriage contract, recording core obligations such as the dower or mahr. The kabin-nama is not just a religious formality; it is a legal document recognised under the Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) Act 1974 and the corresponding Rules made in 2009, and enforceable in the family courts under the Family Courts Act 2023. Uniquely, it also provides a column for special conditions mentioned in Clause 17, where spouses may record the special conditions that are lawful and unambiguous. It is this clause which may have functions similar to a pre-nuptial agreement.

Courts and legal commentators in



Bangladesh have repeatedly recognised that a clear set of conditions written in the kabin-nama carries contractual weight, and the family courts have repeatedly relied on kabin-nama entries (including Clause 17) when deciding on contentious issues.

Across the subcontinent, courts have upheld similar contractual promises. The Jammu & Kashmir High Court in Mohd. Khan v Mst. Shahmalai (1972) enforced a pre-marital condition promising a sum be paid to the wife if the husband leaves her father's house. The judgment emphasised on the validity of such pre-nuptial agreements as long as they do not violate Muslim law or public policy. In Pakistan, the 2024 Supreme Court decision in Muhammad Yousa v. Huma Saeed reaffirmed that terms written in the nikahnama are not merely ceremonial rather binding, and that the 'special conditions' column must be interpreted in favour of the wife where ambiguity exists.

South Asian courts thus do accept pre-marital agreements and marriage-contract conditions as legally significant. Couples are therefore encouraged to discuss and record their intentions in Clause 17 regarding deferred and prompt dower, maintenance during and after marriage, residence arrangements, rights to work or study, remarriage by the husband,

and delegation or limitation of divorce rights. Drafting should be clear and specific, avoiding vague phrasing, and the kabin-nama must be properly signed, witnessed, and registered to strengthen enforceability.

Unfortunately, this significant tool is available only to Muslim marriages only. In cases of Hindu, Christian or any other religious marriages in Bangladesh, there is no direct statutory provision equivalent to Clause 17 that records special pre-marital conditions.

Nevertheless, couples are not without options. A thoughtfully drafted pre-nuptial agreement under the statutory Contract Law 1872 may serve people of all religions, including the couples getting married under the Special Marriage Act 1872, ensuring all benefit from having their expectations recorded. With a pre-nup, they can prevent the marriage from becoming a source of unnecessary conflict and hardship in case it ends in divorce or separation. It encourages transparency before marriage, allows both parties to enter the union with dignity and knowledge, and ensures that neither is left vulnerable to emotional or financial coercion in the worst scenario. Finally, it ensures that even if love fades, respect persists.

The writer is Advocate at the Dhaka Judge Court.

CHILD RIGHTS

Child custody and the best interests of children

ALPH IMRAN CHOWDHURY

The question of who will get the custody of a child after a divorce or separation is not merely a family concern in Bangladesh, but also a question of justice, welfare, and rights. One of the primary goals of a legal system is to ensure that every decision that concerns custody is taken in the best interest of the child.

In Bangladesh, personal laws govern child custody-related matters, and they vary depending on the religious affiliations of the parties. For the Muslims, the relevant laws are the Guardians and Wards Act of 1890, the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance of 1961, and the traditional Islamic law jurisprudence. In the cases of Hindus and Christians, the relevant considerations can be found in the framework



That the best interests of children must be given utmost importance in any undertakings involving children, is confirmed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to which Bangladesh is also a party. However, there is still inadequate enforcement of this standard in the country.

of their personal laws, and the Guardians and Wards Act. Despite such differences, in my view, the primary concern of every system is the same, the well-being, nurture, and welfare-based upbringing of the child.

Traditional Muslim law of hizanat (custody) allows mothers to care for small children up to a certain age, ie, for sons, up to the age of seven, and for daughters, up to the age of puberty. Fathers, on their part, retain the authority of wilayah, the legal authority to make decisions on behalf of the child. However, these traditional rules have changed in practice, with courts leaning towards a more child-centric approach.

This principle was restated by the Bangladesh Supreme Court in various landmark cases. In their decision, the courts have stated that the right to custody is not vested absolutely in either of the parents but rather needs to be decided taking into account the best interest of the child. For instance, the Appellate Division in the case of Md Abu Baker Siddique v S M A Bakar found that the welfare of the child is of the utmost priority. This liberal approach focuses on the fact that the happiness, comfort, and security of the child outweigh what the traditional interpretation says.

However, there are still a few challenges in ensuring the best interest of the child in child custody cases. These problems usually arise due to protracted court cases and lack of specialised child psychological assessments. Another major problem, that most mothers face while seeking custody, is due largely to their social and economic disadvantages, particularly those who do not have an independent income.

The observation that the best interests of children must be given utmost importance in any undertakings that involve children, is confirmed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to which Bangladesh is also a party. However, there is still inadequate enforcement of this standard in the country. Bangladesh has failed to implement a child custody and welfare legislation that integrates international principles. Such a law could help reconcile the contradictory provisions of personal laws and provide a uniform standard to guide the decision in custody, guardianship and visitation related cases.

The other significant factor is to have gender-neutral custody policies. The decision concerning custody should be made based on the individual skills and devotion of the parents, and not on the stereotypical gender roles. In this respect, many jurisdictions have recognised the importance of joint custody and shared parenting, eg, the UK, and India.

Lastly, the focus of custody laws needs to extend beyond the interest of the parent and focus more directly on the general well-being of the child. Legal reforms in line with this spirit will help Bangladesh accomplish its constitutional and international legal duty to protect the rights of children.

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LAW ANALYSIS

Our inherently anti-poor vagrancy laws



WAR AGAINST THE POOR?

KHALID KHAN

Since antiquity, vagrancy laws have always been used as a pretext for arresting people based merely on suspicions, often as a pre-emptive measure. Another peculiarity is that the laws allow the arrest of a person for their status, instead of the acts they have committed. During the colonial times, vagrancy laws were widely enacted in many European colonies, including the British Raj. In the erstwhile Bengal, the Raj enacted the Vagrancy Act, 1943 (Bengal Act), which specifically dealt with the issue of begging as an issue of vagrancy. Interestingly, it was also enacted at a time when Bengal was experiencing a devastating famine. Notably, since antiquity, vagrancy laws have always been used as a pretext for arresting people based merely on suspicions, often as a pre-emptive measure. Another peculiarity is that the laws allow the arrest of a person for their status, instead of the acts they have committed. Thus, it penalises the poor, marginalised and the 'other' people of our society, who cannot afford a home and lead an itinerant life. The arrest and detention of persons because they are poor stems from the stereotypical views held by society towards poverty as a source of criminality. In effect, it limits the freedom of movement of the itinerant workers, and the fear of detention forces them to find work even at lower wages by reducing their bargaining capabilities, while the rich never has to face similar treatment under the law.

Again, the fakirs, sadhus, sanyasis and darvishes have a long tradition of living an itinerant life, inspired by their spirituality

and beliefs. These laws, besides penalising the labour class, also operate to suppress the people who do not conform to the mainstream society and thus undermine the cultural and religious diversity of particular regions. Hence, the laws do not merely have an 'anti-poor' character, but also an intersectionally harmful dimension.

In our jurisdiction, the two most cited laws used to arrest or detain the vagrants are (i) the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 (CrPC) and (ii) the Vagrants and Shelterless People (Rehabilitation) Act, 2011 (VSPR). Section 55(b) of CrPC defines a 'vagabond' as someone 'who has no ostensible means of subsistence, or who cannot give a satisfactory account of himself' and allows the officer in charge of a police station to arrest or cause him/her to be arrested within the limits of such station. The provision specifies that the arrest may be made in the same manner as in section 54, i.e. without a warrant or an order from the Magistrate. Thus, it places the offence of vagrancy in the same category as a cognisable offence as in section 54. Moreover, it also gives the police broad powers to arrest a person.

On the other hand, the VSPR Act provides a broad definition of vagrants, terming them as 'person who has no fixed place or space for living or overnight stay or creates public disturbance by wandering around aimlessly or

engages in begging from own or being induced

and beliefs. These laws, besides penalising the labour class, also operate to suppress the people who do not conform to the mainstream society and thus undermine the cultural and religious diversity of particular regions. Hence, the laws do not merely have an 'anti-poor' character, but also an intersectionally harmful dimension.

Now, these laws have serious human rights implications, in relation to both the civil and political rights, and the economic, social and cultural rights. Apart from making arbitrary arrests and detention, these laws not only restrict a person's freedom of movement (per Article 12, Covenant on Civil and Political Rights or CCPR) but also make it harder to enjoy fair wages and remuneration (per Article 7, Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights or CESCR) due to loss of bargaining power. In the worst case, it forces them to do jobs they do not freely choose, thereby violating their right to work (per Article 6, CESCR). Again, per Article 26 of the CCPR, effective protection against discrimination on any ground, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status must be guaranteed by the State. It requires equality before the law and equal treatment of law for all. However, selective penalisation by the vagrancy laws of people based on their economic condition, the poor in particular, reveals its discriminatory and disproportionate nature, and violates the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

To conclude, the vagrants and homeless should be given a chance to find work and lead a dignified life, rather than arbitrary arresting them or penalising them for their socioeconomic status. Displacing them arbitrarily does not eradicate the root cause of the problem, it conceals the responsibility of the State towards the poor. Instead, a more humane and compassionate approach is necessary for their integration into the society.

The writer works at Law & Our Rights, The Daily Star.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

SPORTS STARS CELEBRATE VICTORY DAY

(Clockwise from left) The Victory Day was celebrated across the country's sporting arenas, with cricket and football legends taking part in exhibition matches in Dhaka on Tuesday. Former national footballers such as Arman Mia and Amit Khan Shuvro featured in an exhibition match between the Red Team and the Green Team at the BFF Artificial Turf. Meanwhile, former national cricket stars Mohammad Rafique, Habibul Bashar, Jahangir Alam, Khaled Mashud and Hasibul Hossain represented Shaheed Mustaq XI in an exhibition match against Shaheed Jewel XI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur in the morning. Later in the evening at the same venue, Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Najmul Hossain Shanto led two teams of current cricketers in an exhibition match organised by the Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh.

'Bad omen' as eight First Division clubs relegated

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) vice-president Faruque Ahmed has called the failure of eight First Division clubs to appear in matches -- a breach that led to their relegation -- a "bad omen" for Bangladeshi cricket.

The protesting clubs, citing alleged irregularities in the recent BCB elections, have questioned the legitimacy of the current board.

Fault lines opened up further as the rift between the board and the protesting clubs saw the ongoing First Division league postponed for two more days after two matchdays. Matches scheduled for the next round on December 17 and 18 will be postponed, the BCB press release read.

Eight First Division clubs walked over in matches on Sunday and Monday, leading to the BCB issuing a press release yesterday saying that teams failing to appear in scheduled matches resulted in relegation, effective from next season, as per tournament regulations. Consequently, Partex Sporting Club, Gazi Tyres Cricket Academy, Amber Sporting Club, Kalabagan Krira Chakra, Khelaghbar Samaj Kallyan Samity, Surjorotun Club, Kakrail Boys Club and Orient Sporting Club have all been demoted to the Second Division.

"There are not two sides here; there is one side. I think the clubs do not want to play," Faruque told the media after the Victory Day exhibition match yesterday morning at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium.

"Now, I don't know how much benefit anyone gets by stopping the game. The loss will be for Bangladesh cricket players."



CAMERON GREEN
Country: Australia
Role: All-rounder
To: Kolkata Knight Riders
For: INR 25.20 cr



PRASHANT VEER
Country: India
Role: Left-arm spinner
To: Chennai Super Kings
For: INR 14.20 cr



LIAM LIVINGSTONE
Country: England
Role: All-rounder
To: Sunrisers Hyderabad
For: INR 13 cr



MATHEESHA PATHIRANA
Country: Sri Lanka
Role: Pacer
To: Kolkata Knight Riders
For: INR 18 cr



KARTIK SHARMA
Country: India
Role: Wicket-keeper batter
To: Chennai Super Kings
For: INR 14.20 cr



MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN
Country: Mustafizur Rahman
Role: Left-arm pacer
To: KKR
For: INR 9.20 cr



Big bucks and broken records

The Indian Premier League mini auction in Abu Dhabi yesterday delivered a flurry of surprises. A fierce bidding war unfolded for Australia all-rounder Cameron Green, who emerged as the most expensive overseas signing in IPL history. Sri Lanka pacer Matheesha Pathirana also commanded a hefty price, while uncapped Indian players Prashant Veer and Kartik Sharma secured big paydays. Bangladesh's most consistent presence in IPL, Mustafizur Rahman, sealed a record-breaking contract for his country.

• The amount paid for Green surpassed the previous overseas record of INR 24.75 crore, set by Kolkata in the 2024 auction for Mitchell Starc.

• Green is now the third most expensive player in IPL history, behind India internationals Rishabh Pant (INR 27 crore) and Shreyas Iyer (INR 26.75 crore).

• The previous highest price for a Bangladesh player was INR 6 crore in the last edition, when Mustafizur was picked up by Delhi Capitals.

PSG ordered to pay Mbappe around 60m euros in wage dispute

AFP, Paris

"What I am most concerned about now is that the trend they have started -- at any time, over any issue, stopping the game -- could become a system... I think this is a bad omen," he added.

At least 50 players staged a protest outside BCB gate 2 over the ongoing conflict. Faruque said the board is looking to resolve the issue quickly, with a meeting scheduled with the 12 remaining First Division teams on Wednesday to draw up a new schedule.

Already, there is awareness within the Cricket Committee Of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) that similar occurrences of walkovers will take place in the Second Division. A CCDM official informed, "The Second Division league will begin in January, and we have heard that 10-12 teams will not play."

"We will talk to the clubs on [December] 20th and give the schedules for players' transfers and the start of the league."



million euros in unpaid salary and around six million euros in holiday payments.

Qatari-owned PSG did not immediately say if they intend to appeal.

Lawyers for Mbappe said in a statement they "noted with satisfaction the decision given by the labour court".

"It re-establishes a simple truth -- even in the professional football industry, labour laws apply to everyone," the lawyers added in a statement.

The French club had said they were basing the figure they were claiming in part on a botched 300m euro transfer to Saudi club Al Hilal which Mbappe refused in June 2023.

Mbappe left for Real Madrid on a free transfer when his contract expired the following summer.



Manchester United blew the lead three times to miss out on moving up to fifth in the Premier League as Bournemouth would not be beaten in a thrilling 4-4 draw at Old Trafford on Monday. United have lost just once in their last 10 games, but coach Ruben Amorim will be frustrated as more points at home were frittered away despite arguably the best attacking display of his reign in charge.



Rishad Hossain became only the second Bangladeshi to feature in the renowned Big Bash League on Tuesday, making his debut for the Hobart Hurricanes against Sydney Thunder at the Bellerive Oval in Hobart. Shakib Al Hasan was the first Bangladeshi in this regard, having played for the Adelaide Strikers in the 2013-14 season. Rishad, however, is yet to take his first wicket in the league, but proved pivotal in a game that the Hobart Hurricanes won by four wickets to begin their campaign. Rishad, who bowled one over in the Powerplay, ended with economical figures of just 18 runs in his three overs, helping the Hobart Hurricanes restrict Sydney Thunder to 180 for six in 20 overs. The Hobart Hurricanes then chased down the target with a ball to spare.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Fortis flourish as Arambagh crumble

SPORTS REPORTER

Fortis FC registered their first win of this season's Federation Cup with a commanding 4-0 victory over promoted Arambagh KS in their Group B match at the Bashundhara Kings Arena in Dhaka yesterday.

The win lifted Fortis to the top of the Group B standings with one victory and two draws. Mohammedan SC sit second with four points from two matches, after their fixture against Bashundhara Kings was postponed by a week due to the unavailability of the Cumilla venue.

After holding stronger sides Kings and Mohammedan in their opening two matches, Fortis were far more clinical against Arambagh, whom they had also beaten 1-0 in their earlier Bangladesh Football League meeting this season.

Arambagh, still without a win, attempted to put Fortis under pressure but struggled to break down a well-organised defence. Fortis took the lead in the 26th minute when Gambian captain Pa Omar Babou sent a long ball forward for Hasan Jummon Nijum, who controlled it inside the box and volleyed past goalkeeper Azad Hossain.

Babou then made it 2-0 from the penalty spot after being brought down in the area by defender Kazi Rahat Mia. Fortis extended their advantage in the 68th minute as a Nigerian forward Onyeakachi Okafor capitalised on another long pass from Mithu Chowdhury, bursting into the box from the right before finishing clinically.

Mithu Chowdhury was involved again late on, delivering another accurate long ball for substitute Mursheed Ali, who beat a defender and calmly placed his shot beyond the advancing Azad Hossain in the 75th minute to complete the rout.





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WINNER
4 TIMES

SPEECH EDITING

Trump seeks up to \$10bn in damages from BBC

The media company says it will fight lawsuit

REUTERS



President Donald Trump sued the BBC for up to \$10 billion in damages over edited clips of a speech that made it appear he directed supporters to storm the US Capitol, opening an international front in his fight against media coverage he deems untrue or unfair.

"As we have made clear previously, we will be defending this case. We are not going to make further comment on ongoing legal proceedings," a BBC spokesperson said.

Trump accused Britain's publicly owned broadcaster of defaming him by splicing together parts of a January 6, 2021 speech, including one section

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Fizz bags record IPL payday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's celebrated pacer Mustafizur Rahman made headlines again after Indian Premier League (IPL) side Kolkata Knight Riders bought him for a whopping INR 9.2 crore (Tk 12.36 crore) -- the highest for any Bangladeshi in the competition's history -- during the 19th edition's



mini-auction held in Abu Dhabi, UAE yesterday.

The 30-year-old, who had a base price of INR two crore, took the mini-auction by storm. Three franchises -- Kolkata, Delhi Capitals and Chennai Super Kings -- showed interest when his name appeared.

The initial bid war was between Chennai and Delhi, but Kolkata later joined Chennai after Delhi reached their remaining budget of INR 5.4 crore. After a tense bargain, Mustafizur secured his sixth IPL franchise.

The left-arm pacer, also known as The Fizz, has previously played

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



The Kushi river, a tributary of the Surma and the primary source of water and livelihood for residents and fishermen of Sylhet city's Kushighat area, has dwindled into a narrow stream. Locals blame unplanned development projects, road construction, brick kilns, canal encroachment, illegal filling and sand extraction for obstructing the river's natural flow, triggering an acute water crisis. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

'I WILL GO'

Said 16-year-old freedom fighter, ready to walk into Kamalpur enemy camp

SAHIDUL ISLAM NIRAB

"Who will go?"

The question hung heavy as hundreds of freedom fighters stood in silence. Everyone knew the mission -- carrying a letter urging surrender into the heart of the enemy camp at Kamalpur of Jamalpur's Bakshiganj upazila -- meant almost certain death.

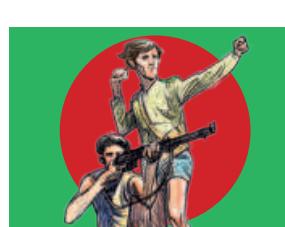
Amid the silence, a teenager -- barely 16 -- stepped forward, raised his hand and said quietly, "I will go."

The young man, now a Bir Protik, was Bashir Ahmed, whose bravery secured him a place in the history of Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War.

Fifty-four years on, Bashir still vividly recalls those days when he took up arms to liberate the country from the atrocities of the Pakistani Army and its local allies.

"While one village after another was being set ablaze, innocent people were killed, and our mothers and sisters were subjected to unspeakable torture, it was impossible for anyone to remain silent."

"And so, I decided to join the Mukti Bahini to fight for my country," Bashir told The Daily Star yesterday -- Bangladesh's 54th Victory Day.



Bashir Ahmed Bir Protik

Bashir, who now lives in a small home in Bakshiganj Sadar, said he was a Class 10 student of Dhanua Kamalpur Cooperative High School when he decided to secretly leave home, cross the border and train in India.

"It was in April. Many people were going to India for training, and I wanted to go too. As my parents were unwilling to let me, I left home secretly with my nephew."

The destination was the Mahendraganj Mukti Bahini camp in India, where Bashir's class teacher from Kamalpur, Solaiman Haque, was selecting recruits.

As Bashir reached the camp, Solaiman refused to enrol him. "You're too young. War is not for you," he said.

Deflated, Bashir stayed at a relative's house in Mahendraganj for 15 days. In May, he heard recruitment had restarted and rushed back.

This time, before his teacher could speak, he firmly said, "Sir, I do not worry about life or death. I must join the war."

Moved by his resolve, Solaiman agreed, and Bashir began his journey as a freedom fighter.

He fought under the Helal Company of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

February 12 polls a test for democratic transition

Says Asian Network for Free Elections

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's upcoming national polls and referendum, slated for February 12, will be an opportunity and a major test for the country's democratic transition, Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) has said.

In a pre-election assessment report released yesterday, the international election monitoring group identified key operational gaps and political risks that could affect the credibility of the polls.

"The February 2026 election and referendum constitute both an opportunity and a test," the report said, warning that how the identified risks are addressed in the coming weeks will significantly shape the credibility of the broader democratic transition.

The July National Charter and several reform commissions outline wide ranging changes to the constitution, electoral

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

HADI SHOOTING

Prime suspect hired car day before attack

Rent-a-car owner held; Rab 'retrieves weapon'

TOUSIF KAIM

Prime suspect Faisal Karim Masud hired a private car for Tk 6,000 a day before the shooting of Osman Sharif Hadi, investigators of the attempted murder case said yesterday.

Faisal, they said, told the driver that he would travel from the capital's Ramna to Manikganj's Shaturia upazila around 11:30am the next day.

Meanwhile, Rab yesterday claimed to have retrieved the weapon used in the shooting.

Officers of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police disclosed the information to The Daily Star following the detention of Nuruzzaman, who allegedly arranged the car for Faisal and his associate.

According to the arrestee, after Faisal and his associate Alamgir boarded the car, Masud changed the route several times and eventually travelled from Gazipur's Kalampur to Mymensingh's Haluaghata, for which Faisal paid Tk 10,000.

Meanwhile, Hadi, spokesperson of Inqilab Mancho, is currently in stable condition as he undergoes treatment in Singapore, said Inqilab Moncho.

In a Facebook post quoting Hadi's brother, Inqilab

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Italian team crafts 3D-printed pastries from plant cells

REUTERS, Rome

Scientists in Italy are developing sweet snacks with lab-grown plant cells and fruit residues, producing a material that a 3D printer can then process into 'pastries' with high nutritional content.

Italy's rich culinary traditions may have just gained Unesco heritage status, but the Nutri3D



project by the country's public research agency ENEA shows scientists are out to push boundaries in the quest for sustainable, nutrient-rich snacks.

Prototypes include snack bars and glossy "honey pearls" designed to preserve flavour and nutritional value.

"In a world where arable land is shrinking and climate change forces us to rethink food production, the goal is to keep making what we are used to eating," said Silvia Massa, head of ENEA's Agriculture 4.0 lab.

The aim "is not to grow the plant itself, but its cells," she added. Northern Europe has led early efforts, with Finnish labs producing fruit compotes from cell cultures and researchers in Zurich developing cocoa-like flavourings.

Dembele, Bonmati scoop FIFA Best awards



REUTERS, Doha

Paris St Germain and France forward Ousmane Dembele was named FIFA men's player of the year in Doha on Tuesday, with Spain and Barcelona midfielder Aitana Bonmati winning the women's award for the third year in a row.

Dembele was instrumental in PSG's first Champions League triumph when they beat Inter Milan 5-0 in the final and scored 35 goals last season across all competitions, including 21 in Ligue 1 to finish as top scorer.

The 28-year-old, who won this year's Ballon d'Or in September, was part of the PSG team which also swept all before them on the domestic front last season and

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



People gather during a search and rescue operation at the site of a collapsed house that was partially destroyed during the war at Shati refugee camp in Gaza City yesterday.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Stabilisation force already running in Gaza: Trump

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump on Monday said the International Stabilization Force for Gaza is already running and that more countries would be added.

"I think that, in a form, it's already running," Trump said in the Oval Office. "More and more countries are coming into it. They're already in but they'll send any number of troops that I ask them to send."

In the occupied West Bank, the Israeli military shot dead a 16-year-old Palestinian during a raid on the town of Tuqu' on Monday evening, the Palestinian health ministry said.

The boy was shot after Israeli military forces gathered in the centre of town late on Monday and began firing "indiscriminately", according to a report by Palestinian state news agency WAFA citing the head of the Tuqu' town council. The military shot the teenager, Ammar Yaser Sabbah, with a live round to the chest, the report said. He was rushed to the hospital but did not survive.