



"We have agreed on a meeting at the highest level - with President Trump... A lot can be decided before the New Year."  
Zelensky hails 'new ideas' on Ukraine peace plan



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## Restoring party discipline now key task for Tarique

Leaders hope his return will help strengthen unity within party

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

After returning to the country, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman is facing a series of challenges ahead of election as the party remains mired in allegations of indiscipline, wrongdoing and infighting.

Still, the party is hopeful, with leaders saying his return will help restore unity and discipline while grassroots workers are moving forward for the polls in a positive and festive spirit.

Party leaders and analysts say Tarique's foremost task is to bring leaders and activists under a single command by reducing internal divisions, stopping infighting, restoring discipline, and ensuring party decisions are followed at all levels.

Ahead of the polls, he must also mobilise party members behind BNP-nominated candidates, prevent leaders from contesting against official nominees, and work to regain the trust of voters.

Tarique has been in Dhaka for only two days, during which his movements have drawn large crowds of party leaders and activists. Analysts say that in the days ahead, reaching ordinary voters directly and seeking their support will be crucial as the party moves toward the polls.

Within the party, this moment is widely seen as a test of Tarique's leadership after his 17-year exile. Tarique guided the party virtually from London in those years.

Leaders warn that failure to strengthen the organisation could leave



BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman stands solemnly before the grave of his father and late president Ziaur Rahman. It was his first visit in nearly two decades. He placed wreaths and offered prayers at the mausoleum. Inset, Tarique wipes his eyes after becoming emotional during the prayers. The photos were taken yesterday afternoon at Zia Udyan in the capital.

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL



**If party members get involved in violence or wrongdoing, the party's image will suffer.**

Al Masud Hasanuzzaman  
Former professor of government and politics, JU

BNP facing difficult days ahead.

Political analysts say strengthening unity and improving the party's image among voters will be Tarique's biggest tests before the election.

Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, a former professor of government and politics at Jahangirnagar University, said Tarique had already expressed concern about the law and order situation after his return, which would make maintaining discipline among leaders and activists particularly difficult.

Masud said establishing a clear chain of command and keeping party members united would not be easy.

Tarique, he added, must take a firm stance to ensure leaders and activists follow party decisions and stay away from election violence.

"If party members get involved in violence or wrongdoing, the party's image will suffer," he said.

Analysts also point out that a section of BNP leaders and activists believe the party is close to coming to power, a perception that could encourage behaviour contrary to party interests at the grassroots level.

Preventing such actions, they say, will be another challenge.

Meanwhile, several leaders have announced plans to contest the election as rebel candidates, ignoring party decisions.

Party insiders say persuading them to accept official nominations and directives will be among Tarique's toughest tasks.

After the August 5 changeover last year, allegations emerged that some leaders and activists were involved in activities violating party discipline.

On September 18, Tarique said that around 7,000 leaders and activists had been expelled for breaching party rules.

After his return, restoring discipline has become the central challenge, said Mohammad Mojibur Rahman, a professor at Dhaka University's Institute of Education and Research.

He said if party members engage in wrongdoing while Tarique is present in the country, it would damage his reputation and give opponents an opportunity to criticise him.

BNP has also faced criticism over internal conflicts and extortion since the fall of the Awami League government in 2024.

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## Tarique offers prayers at Zia's grave after 19yrs

Pays respects to martyrs of Liberation War at National Memorial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After 19 years, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday visited the grave of his father and late president Ziaur Rahman.

Tarique, accompanied by senior party leaders, placed wreaths and offered prayers at the mausoleum in Zia Udyan at 4:50pm. He stood silently for a while before his father's grave, then raised his hands in prayer, visibly overcome with emotion.

Members of the BGB, Rab, army and police barred media personnel and party activists from entering the mausoleum complex. Only senior party leaders were allowed inside.

While Tarique was paying respects, party leaders and activists gathered outside.

Prayers were also offered for the recovery of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and for those martyred in the July uprising.

Tarique last visited his father's grave on September 1, 2006, marking the BNP's founding anniversary. At the time, he was serving as the party's senior joint secretary general.

Tarique Rahman returned home from London on Thursday morning, ending his 17-year-long exile.

Yesterday, he left his Gulshan residence for Zia Udyan around 2:45pm.

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## EDUCATION IN 2025

# A year of strikes, setbacks and disruptions

- Education disrupted nationwide by strikes, protests and policy reversals
- 1cr primary students affected by prolonged teacher agitation
- Primary education budget cut despite deepening learning crisis
- HSC pass rate plummeted to 58.83%, lowest in 21yrs
- SSC pass rate fared little better, hitting a 16yr low

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

In a Narsingdi village, Ahmed Mia faces a paradox common to millions of Bangladeshi parents. His daughter, Rafia, has completed the second grade at the local government primary school, yet she struggles to read Bangla.

"Nearly 90 percent of students here pass, but many cannot properly read," observes Ahmed from Bakharnagar.

In the neighbouring village of Satpara, Sonia Akter worries that the emptiness of the classrooms will soon translate into crowded local factories and marriage registries. "If school closures continue, boys could be drawn into crime, and early marriages may increase," she says.

Their anxieties are well-founded. For Bangladesh's education sector, 2025 was a year of disruptions, signifying major flaws in governance. From the primary level to the universities, the academic calendar was shredded by prolonged teacher agitation, government crackdowns, and indecisions on curriculum policies.

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## NCP-Jamaat deal 'likely in a day or two'

SHAMIMA RITA

The National Citizen Party is likely to finalise a seat-sharing deal with Jamaat-e-Islami within the next one or two days ahead of the election, even as a section of senior women leaders has publicly opposed any such arrangement.

The prominent women leaders opposing the possible deal include Senior Joint Convener Samanta Sarmeen, Joint Member Secretary Nusrat Tabassum, Senior Joint Member Secretary Tasnim Jara, Joint Convener Monira Sharmin, and Tajnuva Jabeen.

They argue that the NCP has already forged a distinct political identity and that any electoral compromise with Jamaat would dilute, and eventually erase, that identity.

One of them, requesting anonymity, said that five of the top party leaders, including Convener Nahid Islam and Member Secretary Akhter Hossen, were in favour of striking a deal with Jamaat.

However, she said, a group of 30 other senior leaders, including the women, disagreed.

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## HADI MURDER Will not leave Shahbagh until justice is served

Vows Inqilab Moncho, demands advisers visit protest to explain progress

DU CORRESPONDENT

Inqilab Moncho yesterday vowed to continue its Shahbagh blockade programme until the perpetrators of Sharif Osman Hadi's murder are brought to justice.



Announcing the programme, member secretary Abdullah Al Jaber said the state has failed to assure justice over the killing.

"We have kept our patience. Does the state care? What have they done to assure us?" he told a gathering at the Shahbagh intersection after Friday prayers, as part of a preannounced programme.

"We will not listen to the government anymore. We will not leave this place until we get a clear explanation from the government about the killers of Osman Hadi," he said, demanding that all government advisers should come to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Leaders and activists of Inqilab Moncho began a sit-in at the capital's Shahbagh intersection after Juma prayers yesterday, demanding justice for the killing of Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, one of the frontliners in last year's July uprising.

PHOTO: STAR

## 4 killed, several hurt as launches collide in Meghna

2 more die as vessel hits bulk carrier in N'ganj for dense fog, low visibility

STAR REPORT

At least six people were killed and several others injured in two riverine accidents in Chandpur and Narayanganj yesterday. Officials said poor visibility, caused by dense fog, might have led to the incidents.

In Chandpur, four of them died after two launches collided in the Meghna river early yesterday.

The victims were Abdul Gani, 38, and Md Saju, 45, Rina, 35, of Bhola's Lalmojon upazila; and Md Hanif, 60, of the district's Chafashion upazila, said police.

They were passengers of the Dhaka-bound MV Zakir Samrat-3, which departed from Bhola's Ghosherhat. It was crossing the Haimchar area shortly after 2:00am when the Barishal bound MV Adventure-9 struck it.

Following the incident, the route permits of the two launches have been cancelled, said Md Kamruzzaman, deputy director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) at Chandpur river port.

Mohammad Hasan, a passenger of MV Adventure-9, said the collision took

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## Two killed after armed attack on church in Niger

AFP, Niamey

A couple were killed in southwest Niger this week after armed individuals fired into the air inside a church, locals told AFP yesterday.

The incident occurred in the Dosso region of Niger, a Sahel country that has been plagued for a decade by a conflict pitting the military against fighters said to be linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group.

ACLED, a non-governmental organisation monitoring conflicts around the world, said nearly 2,000 people had died as a result of such violence in Niger this year.

"The attack happened in Mailo village at around 11:00 pm on Wednesday night. Christians were attending mass in the church when armed individuals came in and fired into the air. There was panic," a local requesting anonymity told AFP.

"A man and his wife ran and hid in their house but (the assailants) followed them and they were killed."

Another local said some of the churchgoers had fled to neighbouring villages and others had headed for the bush.



Clockwise from left, Tarique Rahman and senior party leaders observe a one-minute silence in memory of the martyred freedom fighters at the National Memorial in Savar last night. Tarique signs the visitors' book. Earlier in the afternoon, BNP leaders and activists joined their hands in prayer for late party founder Ziaur Rahman by the lake outside his mausoleum at Zia Uddin in the capital.



PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL, AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Tarique offers prayers at Zia's grave after 19yrs

FROM PAGE 1

As a large number of leaders and activists lined both sides of the road, it took him nearly two hours to reach. Throughout the journey, Tarique waved to supporters from inside his bus.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir and other senior leaders received Tarique and accompanied him to the mausoleum complex.

Ahead of Tarique's arrival, law enforcement personnel had been deployed in and around the area from noon.

Visitors inside the park were kept at a safe distance, and no one was allowed to approach the grave.

Around 1:00pm, a large number of party leaders and activists began gathering around the area, carrying banners and photographs of the party leader.

Speaking to journalists at Zia Uddin, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir expressed hope that Bangladesh would become a truly democratic state under Tarique's leadership.

"Tarique Rahman's return is not just a personal comeback; it marks the beginning of a new chapter in the country's politics. It will pave the way for the restoration of democracy and fulfilment of people's aspirations," Fakhru said.

He also said people have started dreaming again and that Tarique now stood at the centre of those hopes. Expressing confidence, Fakhru said Tarique would implement his far-reaching plans for the welfare of the people.

BNP Standing Committee member Mirza Abbas said, "Under the leadership of Tarique Rahman, democracy will fully blossom."

He said the confusion and uncertainty among the public over election-related issues has been cleared up with Tarique's return. "Tarique Rahman's presence has brought clarity to the political arena. People are now far more confident than before about a free and fair election."

### NATIONAL MEMORIAL VISIT

Later in the night, Tarique visited the National Memorial in Savar. Along with senior party leaders, he paid his respects to the martyred freedom fighters, observed a one-minute silence in their memory, and signed the visitors' book.

Tarique departed from Zia Uddin around 5:00pm and reached the National Memorial around 10:00pm.

As tributes are required to be paid before sunset, BNP Standing Committee members Goyeshwar Chandra Roy and Abdul Moyeen Khan reached Savar before Tarique and placed wreaths at the memorial on his behalf.

It took Tarique around five hours to get to Savar from Zia Uddin, as party leaders and activists crowded in front of his vehicle at various points along the route. Members of the army and police escorted him amid the heavy crowd, while the vehicle moved forward slowly. On the way, Tarique stood at the front of his bus and waved to party leaders and activists.

At around 10:30pm, he left the National Memorial and returned to his Gulshan residence around midnight.

### TODAY'S AGENDA

Today, Tarique is expected to formally register as a voter. After completing the process, he will visit the grave of Sharif Osman Bin Hadi near the Dhaka University Central Mosque.

He will then go to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR), popularly known as Pangu Hospital, to meet those injured in last year's July uprising.

## Restoring party discipline now key task

FROM PAGE 1

According to Ain o Salih Kendra, internal clashes within BNP and its associate bodies led to 259 incidents between January and November 2025, leaving at least 66 people dead and 2,923 injured. Analysts say the figures underscore the urgency of restoring discipline.

Tensions have also surfaced over seat allocation. After the BNP announced nominations and agreed to leave some seats for alliance partners, protests broke out in several districts.

In Jashore's Manirampur area, leaders and activists yesterday

protested after BNP decided not to field a candidate in Jashore-5.

Similar demonstrations took place in Nilphamari-1 after Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam announced a candidate, while grassroots leaders also protested in Kishoreganj-4 and Jhenaidah-4 over seats left for partners.

In Brahmanbaria-2, BNP leader Rumeen Farhana has begun campaigning as an independent candidate after being denied a party nomination.

Political analyst Mojibur said Tarique should avoid being surrounded by leaders who only offer praise and fail to present the real

picture of the party.

He said Tarique should quickly assess the organisation's actual condition, warning that if BNP leaders contest seats left for alliance partners, doubts and dissatisfaction toward him could grow.

Several BNP Standing Committee members said some political parties have already begun spreading false information against the BNP.

Since Tarique's return, misleading content about him has circulated on social media, they said, making it another challenge to counter such narratives while maintaining the party's position ahead of the election.

## 4 killed, several hurt as launches collide in Meghna

FROM PAGE 1

place as drivers of the vessels failed to see each other due to heavy fog.

Abdullah Al Mamun, superintendent of Dhaka district river police, confirmed the recovery of bodies of three men and a woman and their identities.

Several injured passengers were hospitalised, he added.

Jhalakathi police seized MV Adventure 9 after it anchored at the Jhalakathi launch terminal yesterday morning.

Four staffers were detained for interrogation.

SM Bayzid Ibne Akbar, additional superintendent of police (Sadar circle) of Jhalakathi, said the launch was handed over to the river police for further legal steps.

Barishal river police Superintendent Nazmul Haque said the Chandpur river Police would take the next actions as the incident occurred there.

Hours after the incident, Shipping Adviser Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain told reporters, "Launches operating without licenced drivers, failing to turn on lights, or violating regulations will have their licences and route permits revoked."

The adviser said a committee has been formed to investigate the incident.

"The way one vessel hit the other suggests that the person operating it may have fallen asleep or handed control to someone else."

The adviser said launches have been instructed not to operate at night during foggy conditions until visibility improves.

The families of the deceased in the incident will get Tk 1.5 lakh each, and the injured Tk 50,000 each, he added.

Zullikar Ali, traffic inspector of the BIWTA's marine safety and traffic management department in Barishal, said there is a directive to suspend all vessel movement when visibility drops below 100 metres.

"As part of cautionary measure, we made public announcements using microphones at the Barishal river port in this regard on Thursday. However, such announcements could not be made on Thursday in Jhalakathi as we do not have any staffer posted there," he said.

He added that action is being taken against those who ignored the restrictions and continued vessel operations despite dense fog.

## A year of strikes, setbacks and disruptions

FROM PAGE 1

The troubles began in January and escalated swiftly. Primary school teachers, demanding salary upgrades, attempted to march towards Shahbagh intersection from the Central Shaheed Minar, only to be blocked by police. By May, the unrest had hardened into a nationwide strike affecting all 65,567 government primary schools. Over 380,000 teachers walked out, and one crore students were locked out of schools. The government's eventual offer to upgrade assistant teachers was rejected, leading to a tenuous truce that barely lasted the summer.

The discord was not limited to primary education. In October, teachers from MPO-enlisted institutions (private schools that receive state subsidies) occupied the streets near the National Press Club. Their demand was modest: a house rent allowance of 20 percent of their basic salary, replacing a flat rate of Tk 1,500 that remained frozen for years.

The government's response was aggressive: police used water cannons, sound grenades, and batons. More than 100 teachers were injured. A similar scene played out in November with primary teachers.

"Investment in teachers has been minimal for a long time," said Rasheda K Choudhury, the executive director of the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).

"When basic financial demands are ignored, protests become inevitable," said Rasheda, also former adviser to a caretaker government.

She pointed out a grim double standard: while other interest groups saw demands met peacefully, teachers were beaten in the streets.

If the streets were chaotic, the classrooms were in a state of confusion. The year began with a textbook fiasco — the National Curriculum and Textbook Board failed to distribute books on time — and then saw the government surrender to vested groups over recruitment of music and physical education teachers.

In August, the government moved to appoint these teachers in government primary schools. But three months later, the plan was scrapped following pressure from Islamist groups, including Hefazat-e-Islam. The retreat was described by Rasheda as "capitulation," warning that removal of holistic learning sends "conflicting signals" in a state that ostensibly promotes culture.

The most damning verdict on the system, however, came from the examination papers of school students. The Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) pass rate plummeted to 58.83 percent, the lowest in two decades. The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) pass rate fared little better, hitting a 16-year low.

Officials blamed the removal of "sympathetic marking" — a euphemism for grade inflation — for this year's poor show. Rasheda argues this is merely a "warning, not a shock," exposing the "real picture" of learning gaps that have widened during years of neglect.

## Will not leave Shahbagh

FROM PAGE 1

Shahbagh and explain what steps have been taken so far to ensure justice.

He said maintaining state stability is the responsibility of the government, not the people, and warned of a nationwide blockade if immediate action is not taken.

Hadi, spokesperson of Inqilab Moncho and a prominent figure of the July uprising, was shot on December 12, a day after the Election Commission announced the schedule for the next national election. He was airlifted to Singapore for advanced treatment, where he died on the

demonstration led by Inqilab Moncho blocked Shahbagh around 2:30 pm. Vehicular movement has remained halted since then.

The platform had earlier announced a three-point demand: formation of a speedy trial tribunal and completion of the trial within a maximum of 30 working days; an impartial investigation involving internationally recognised professional agencies; identification, arrest and prosecution of Awami terrorists allegedly hiding within civil and military intelligence agencies, along with the resignation of the home affairs adviser, the special



Protesters at Shahbagh around 1:00am today.

PHOTO: STAR

night of December 18.

His death sparked widespread outrage and calls for swift and exemplary punishment of those responsible.

Jaber urged political parties to be vocal in demanding a trial. "If you do not stand up for the trial of this murder, the people of Bangladesh will assume that you, too, have a hand in it," he said.

Md Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, told The Daily Star that a

assistant and the law adviser.

Jaber said Hadi's fight against cultural hegemony remains ongoing. "In line with Hadi's principles and objectives, this struggle will continue. It is a fight to protect our independence and sovereignty," he added.

He declared the area "Shaheed Osman Hadi Chattar," saying, "From today, this square will bear the name of Shaheed Osman Hadi. Our movement will remain active on the streets until justice is served."

## NCP-Jamaat deal

FROM PAGE 1

She also said that women leaders declined an offer to contest the election as candidates under the possible seat-sharing deal with Jamaat.

Confirming that talks are under way, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon that discussions with the NCP were being held on a one-to-one basis.

"There is a possibility of sharing seats, and the issue will become clear very soon," he said, adding that clarity would emerge before the December 29 deadline for submitting nomination papers.

Porwar said the final outcome would depend on the nomination submission process, possible withdrawals, and continued discussions.

He also noted that before 2026, Jamaat would decide whether to form an alliance, pursue seat-sharing deals, or contest the election through another arrangement.

NCP Member Secretary Akhter declined to give a specific timeline but said a decision would be taken shortly.

He also said that discussions with both Jamaat and BNP were ongoing and that no final decision had yet been made.

According to NCP sources, the party had been preparing to contest the election alone for the past two months. That posture shifted after the killing of Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, spokesperson of Inqilab Moncho and an independent candidate for Dhaka-8.

He was shot in broad daylight on December 12 and died six days later at a hospital in Singapore. Since then, security concerns among NCP leaders

and activists have intensified, while party leaders have increasingly felt that alignment with a major political force is necessary to consolidate the NCP's place in national politics.

With BNP yet to make its position on reforms and the July charter referendum clear, some NCP leaders now view Jamaat as a more suitable option.

Sources said that although no official announcement has been made, most members expressed support for sharing seats with Jamaat during the past two days of executive committee meetings.

A member who attended Thursday night's meeting, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the committee has more than 50 members, 40 of whom were present.

"They discussed election participation and seat-sharing deal with Jamaat. Except for three members, everyone gave a positive signal in favour of a deal," he said.

He added that the committee asked Nahid and Akhter to determine the conditions and process of any such arrangement.

Explaining the reasoning behind the shift, the leader said BNP has moved far from the commitments it made under the July charter, particularly on state reforms and the referendum.

He claimed the BNP has instructed its candidates not to campaign in favour of the July charter, reforms, or the referendum, and that the party has lagged behind in alliance and seat-sharing talks with the NCP.

BNP sources, however, said that until yesterday evening, the NCP had not contacted the party by phone to arrange any meeting or discussion.

## Fire breaks out at rooftop warehouse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire broke out at a warehouse located on the roof of an eight-storey commercial building, Khaddar Bazar Shopping Complex, in the capital's Gulistan yesterday evening.

The fire was reported around 5:28pm, and the first firefighting unit reached the scene at 5:33pm, fire officials said.

Anwarul Islam, an official of the Fire Service and Civil Defence media wing, said nine firefighting units brought the blaze under control around 6:58pm.

No casualties were reported immediately, and the cause of the fire could not be confirmed yet.

## Brick kiln worker killed in workplace accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A worker was killed after being trapped in a machine at a brick kiln in Fatikchhari upazila of Chattogram yesterday.

The incident occurred around 12:30pm at MA Bricks in Painsong.

The deceased -- Raihan Uddin, 18, from Muktagachha in Mymensingh -- had been working at the brick kiln as a machine operator.

Abdul Kaiyum, team leader of the Fatikchhari Fire Service, said Raihan's leg got stuck in a machine while he was feeding soil into it. At one point, the machine pulled him inside, causing fatal injuries.

He died on the spot, the fire service official said.

Fire service personnel later recovered the body from the machine and handed it over to police for further procedures.

A police team, led by Sub-Inspector Mahmudul Hasan of Fatikchhari Police Station, later sent the body to Chattogram Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

DIFE's Chattogram Deputy Inspector General Mahub Hasan told The Daily Star that legal action would be taken as per rules.



PHOTO: STAR

Firefighters in action to douse a fire broke out at a warehouse on the roof of an eight-storey building in Gulistan, Dhaka last evening.

## THANCHI IN BANDARBAN

# Green crops replace tobacco along Sangu

MONG SING HAI MARMA, Bandarban

Farmers along the banks of the Sangu river in Bandarban's Thanchi upazila are gradually moving away from tobacco cultivation, turning instead to green, environment-friendly crops in a shift that is improving livelihoods while easing pressure on forests and fragile hill ecosystems.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw rows of lush



green fields stretching across hill slopes and along riverbanks. Where tobacco had dominated

the landscape for decades as the main cash crop, Chinese peanuts, beans, mustard, watermelons and seasonal vegetables are now being cultivated, marking a transformation driven by economic necessity and growing environmental awareness.

While profitable, tobacco cultivation in the hills takes a heavy environmental toll.

Large quantities of firewood are required to cure tobacco leaves, leading to widespread tree felling from nearby natural forests. This has degraded hillsides, reduced wildlife habitats and contributed to environmental pollution. Tobacco farming has also been harmful to soil quality in the region.

Angsing Nu Marma of

Chiniang Para, who shifted from tobacco to peanut cultivation, said soil conditions in the area have improved since farmers began abandoning tobacco.

Many indigenous farmers shared similar experiences, saying tobacco cultivation involved high costs, constant labour, uncertain markets and long-term environmental damage. As a result, they have returned to traditional and environment-friendly farming practices.

Farmers also said birds have returned and wildlife movement has increased in areas that were once silent, signalling signs of ecological recovery.

The shift is also proving financially viable. According to farmers, peanut cultivation requires comparatively lower investment and less maintenance, generating Tk 1.5-2 lakh in profit after harvest.

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## Fresh clashes erupt in DR Congo's Uvira

AFP, Bukavu

Fresh clashes erupted yesterday near Uvira in the Democratic Republic of Congo's east between the M23 group and pro-government militia, local and security sources said.

The Rwanda-backed M23 militia had seized the strategic city near the border with Burundi earlier this month, shortly after the Congolese and Rwandan governments signed a peace deal in Washington that US President Donald Trump hailed as a "great miracle".

After the US accused Rwanda of violating the peace agreement it signed with its neighbour in early December, M23 said it would withdraw from Uvira. But plainclothes M23 members have stayed behind in the city, according to local and security forces.

Yesterday, "around 6:00 am, two M23 patrol boats were hit in the Kalundu port before catching fire," Martin Mahikiri Mashimango, a local civil society leader, told AFP.

A Congolese security source told AFP on condition of anonymity that "two enemy patrol boats were hit by our drones in Kalundu," a port on Lake Tanganyika.

Clashes between M23 and pro-government forces erupted earlier in the week near Uvira when the Rwanda-backed militant and a pro-Kinshasa militia called Wazalendo traded gunfire "that could be heard across Uvira," Mashimango had told AFP at the time.

## Severe cold disrupts lives

FROM PAGE 12

Met Office. Farmers and agricultural labourers are among the worst affected in the region.

Nazir Ali, 65, a farmer from Milonpur village in Rangpur's Mithapukur upazila, said, "On Thursday afternoon, I started working in my potato field with three labourers, but we could not continue even for an hour."

The thick fog has also severely affected river, rail and road communications.

Sahidul Islam, a boatman at Jatrabari river ghat in Kurigram, said, "Even at noon, we have

to operate very carefully due to dense fog. Boat navigation becomes too risky after 4:00pm."

The worst sufferers are day labourers, the landless poor and people living in shoo areas.

Maneshwari Bala, 67, from Uttar Saptan village in Lalmonirhat, said she has nothing but a thin shawl. "I cannot go outside because of the cold. If it continues like this, I will fall seriously ill," she said.

Local representatives expressed concern over a shortage of blankets.

Bablu Mia, chairman of Begumganj Union

Parishad in Kurigram's Ulipur upazila, said, "In previous years, many private individuals and organisations came forward, but this year that support is largely absent. More government allocation is urgently needed."

According to sources at the Rangpur Divisional Commissioner's Office, so far 86,000 blankets have been allocated for cold-stricken people across five districts -- Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Nilphamari and Gaibandha. Preparations for additional allocations are underway.

## Gaza hospital halts

FROM PAGE 12

hospital's ability to deliver basic services."

He urged local and international organisations to intervene swiftly to ensure a steady supply of fuel.

Despite a fragile truce observed since October 10, the Gaza Strip remains engulfed in a severe humanitarian crisis.

While the ceasefire agreement stipulated the entry of 600 aid trucks per day into Gaza, only 100 to 300 carrying humanitarian assistance can currently enter, according to the United Nations and non-governmental organisations.

The remaining convoys largely transport commercial goods that remain inaccessible to most of Gaza's 2.2 million people.

International medical charity Doctors Without

Borders (MSF) now manages roughly one-third of Gaza's 2,300 hospital beds, while all five stabilisation centres for children suffering from severe malnutrition are supported by international NGOs.

On a daily basis, the vast majority of Gaza's residents rely on aid from UN agencies and international NGOs for survival. Gaza's health sector has been among the hardest hit by the war.

During the fighting, the Israeli military repeatedly struck hospitals and medical centres across Gaza, accusing Hamas of operating command centres there, an allegation the group denied.

In Israel's ensuing military campaign in Gaza, at least 70,942 people -- also mostly civilians -- have been killed, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

## US launches strikes

FROM PAGE 12

"decisions to be taken by the leadership of the two countries."

The strike comes after Trump in late October began warning that Christianity faces an "existential threat" in Nigeria and threatened to militarily intervene in the West African country over what he says is its failure to stop violence targeting Christian communities.

Reuters reported on Monday the US had been conducting intelligence-gathering flights over large parts of Nigeria since late November.

Nigeria's foreign ministry said the strike was carried out as part of ongoing security cooperation with the United States, involving intelligence sharing and strategic coordination to target militant groups.

"This has led to precision hits on terrorist targets in Nigeria by air strikes in the North West," the ministry

## BPL 12 begins in style

FROM PAGE 12

chipped in with 41 and 33, respectively.

BCB also arranged a cultural programme between the two opening-day matches. Actress Tanjin Tisha's dance performance was followed by a musical show by Fuad Almuqtadir and his team, before the evening concluded with a light show and fireworks.

In the second match of the day, Chattogram Royals avoided further embarrassment by fielding the mandatory two foreign players -- Pakistan's Mirza Tahir Baig and Afghanistan wicketkeeper-batsman Masood Gurbaz -- against

Noakhali Express. According to BPL bylaws, teams must include a minimum of two and a maximum of four overseas players in the playing eleven.

The board took over the franchise a day before the tournament when owners Triangle Services Limited withdrew, citing financial difficulties. Compounding the poor build-up, the captains' photoshoot was cancelled as the trophy failed to arrive in Bangladesh.

However, once the action moved to the field, quality cricket finally brought much-needed relief as the BPL began on an encouraging note.

## Malaysia ex-PM

FROM PAGE 12

state fund Najib co-founded in 2009 during the first of his nine years in power in the Southeast Asian country.

More than \$1 billion allegedly made its way into accounts linked to 72-year-old Najib, who was first imprisoned in 2022 in another IMDB case and has long insisted he has been made the scapegoat for Malaysia's biggest-ever financial scandal.

During a verdict that took five hours to deliver, High Court judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah said Najib's contention that he was repeatedly deceived by others at IMDB was implausible and to believe that would "stretch the imagination into the realms of pure fantasy."

On a day of reckoning for arguably Malaysia's most divisive politician Najib was found guilty of all four counts of abuse of power and all 21 money laundering charges, after a marathon legal battle that included multiple appeals and a partial royal pardon.

# One more held over attacks on Star, Prothom Alo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested another individual in connection with the attack, looting, and arson at the offices of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo.

With this, the total number of arrests in the cases rose to 32.

The arrestee, identified as Athahar Ali alias Swapan, 33, was apprehended from Panchagarh on Thursday night, said Tejgaon Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Kya Shi Nyu Marma last night.

The arrest was made with the assistance and information provided by Police Headquarters, said the OC.

He said Athahar had uploaded sensitive videos and photographs of the attacks on the offices of the two national dailies on Facebook in an attempt to incite the public and encouraged others to share them widely. The OC added that Athahar was produced before a court.

## DIPU MURDER

# 18 held so far, four confess before court

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police have so far arrested 18 people in connection with the killing of Dipu Chandra Das in Bhaluka, Mymensingh, following allegations of "hurting religious sentiments" on the night of December 18.

Among them, four have given confessional statements before the court.

Additional Superintendent of Police (Administration) of Mymensingh, Abdullah Al Mamun, confirmed the information to The Daily Star.

Police arrested six more people early Thursday in connection with the case. The arrestees are Taqbir, 22; Ruhul Amin, 42; Noor Alam, 33; Shamim Mia, 28; Selim Mia, 22; and Masum Khalasi, 22.

They were produced before a Mymensingh court on Thursday afternoon with a prayer for five days' remand. The court fixed Sunday for hearing the remand prayer and sent them to jail, said Md Abdullah Al Mamun, additional superintendent of police in Mymensingh.

"The arrested individuals allegedly incited factory workers with slogans, spread the incident outside the factory, and pressured Dipu to resign," the additional superintendent of police said.

Earlier, 12 people were arrested in separate operations conducted by police and RAB on last Saturday and Sunday. The court granted three days' remand for each of them.

Speaking to The Daily Star, ASP Mamun said after the remand period, six of the 12 accused were produced before the court yesterday, and four gave confessional statements under Section 164.

"They admitted their involvement and provided important information. As the incident is very sensitive, we are closely reviewing the statements," he said.

## Any party against

FROM PAGE 12

guardians of the student community, the Jamaat ameer said, "For the last 54 years, pens were snatched from students' hands. Innocent students were misled, and weapons were put in their hands. Educational institutions were turned into mini cantonments."

He said the situation has improved a bit, but urged caution. "Until this shadow is eliminated, Chhatra Shibir must continue its struggle."

Addressing the conference, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar said, "Failing to confront Shibir with logic and ideology, the opposing forces have resorted to lies and propaganda. They have labelled Shibir as anti-independence and 'rogkara', but failed to prove it. In student union elections at four public universities, the people rejected them."

Nurul Islam Saddam was elected president of Shibir for the 2026 session through a vote of members. Sibgatullah was appointed as the new secretary general of the student organisation.

## Tarique may register

FROM PAGE 12

Islam Sarkar, said the EC is fully prepared and sees no complication regarding Tarique's future eligibility to contest elections once he becomes a voter.

He added that security considerations for both Tarique and the EC building will determine whether the registration is conducted at his Gulshan residence or at the EC office, a decision yet to be finalised.

The EC prepared the photo-based voter list in 2008, but Tarique Rahman and his wife, Zubaida Rahman, were not enrolled

In the opening session, Omar Bin Hadi, elder brother of slain Inqilab Moncho spokesperson Sharif Osman Hadi, also spoke. He said, "Not as Osman Hadi's brother, but as a fellow fighter, I want to say that it is you who must decide how Bangladesh will be built in the days ahead. If anyone retreats from here or collaborates with a neighbouring state or the deep state to help re-establish fascism in this country, you will be held accountable before Allah."

He added, "May this Bangladesh be freed from hegemony in exchange for Osman Hadi's blood, and may justice be established in this country."

Nurul Islam Saddam was elected president of Shibir for the 2026 session through a vote of members. Sibgatullah was appointed as the new secretary general of the student organisation.

at the time, as they had been living in London after leaving Bangladesh on September 11 that year.

Zubaida Rahman returned to Dhaka with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on May 6 this year, registered as a voter, and returned to London on June 5.

Tarique Rahman returned to the country on Thursday with his wife and daughter after 6,314 days abroad.

He was not included in subsequent voter lists prepared for the 2014, 2018 and 2024 national elections.

## HADI KILLING Islami Andolon to stage rally in Dhaka on January 9

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islami Andolon Bangladesh (IAB) will hold a mass rally in Dhaka on January 9 demanding the arrest of those responsible for the killing of Shaheed Sharif Osman Hadi and to build public opinion in favour of the July Charter.

The party announced the decision in a release yesterday, following its regular meeting on Thursday at the central office in Purana Paltan, chaired by IAB Ameer Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim.

Earlier, Jamaat-e-Islami said it would organise a rally in Dhaka on January 3 with the same demand.

According to IAB, the January 9 rally will also press for improvement of the law and order situation, recovery of illegal arms, creation of a level playing field, and promotion of the July Charter through a referendum.

At the meeting, the IAB ameer expressed concern over deteriorating law and order and criticised the failure to bring Osman Hadi's killers to justice. The meeting was attended by IAB Secretary General Yunus Ahmed, Assistant Secretary General Gazi Ataur Rahman, Ashraful Alam, Sheikh Fazle Bari Masud, Assistant Secretary General KM Atikur Rahman, Organising Secretary Shah Iftekhar Tariq, and other central leaders.

## Farmer killed in elephant attack in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,  
Ctg

A farmer was killed in an elephant attack at Banskhal Eco Park in Chattogram yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Kamal Uddin, 45, a resident of Chambal union under the upazila.

Anisuzzaman Sheikh, deputy ranger of the Chattogram Wildlife Management Division, told The Daily Star that the forest department received information around 10:00am, and a team later recovered the body from the park area.

He said some portions of land inside the eco park are privately owned, and Kamal used to cultivate crops on one such plot. The attack occurred when he went to his farmland in the morning.

"The victim sustained severe injuries to his head and chest after being attacked by an elephant," said Anisuzzaman, adding that the body was handed over to the family after recovery.

Banskhal Eco Park is adjacent to the Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary, which is home to a herd of around 60 to 65 wild elephants.

## EDUCATION GROWER ASSOCIATION

# A beacon of hope for students in Jamuna shoals

SAHIDUL ISLAM NIRAB, Jamalpur

The prospect of higher education is often a distant dream for many students hailing from rural areas, especially those residing in the remote shoals.

To turn that dream into reality for students living in shoals of Jamuna river under Sadar and Kazipur upazilas of Sirajganj, a platform – Education Grower Association – has been working tirelessly since its inception on May 3, 2022.

What began as an initiative of a small group of 100 public university students from the two upazilas has now become a beacon of hope for hundreds of students from the marginalised rural communities.

The organisation is dedicated to its mission to make higher education opportunities accessible to rural students and promote a culture of pursuing knowledge, raising awareness, and foster empowerment.

Every year, EGA organises various events



including scholarship examinations for school and college students, workshops on higher education, and different religious and cultural competitions, including Quran recitation, Islamic songs, and extempore speeches, creating opportunities for rural students to develop both academically and socially.

On June 9 this year, the organisation



hosted its fourth annual grand event, bringing together around 1,000 students from 24 schools and marking yet another milestone in its ongoing journey of educational transformation along the Jamuna river basin.

At the event, more than 150 winners received awards in recognition of their academic excellence and dedication, while 24 newly admitted public university students were accorded reception for their success and perseverance.

To enhance educational standards, EGA conducts model tests for SSC candidates, offers merit-based coaching for university admission seekers, and promote environmental awareness through its "Greening Schools" initiative, where quiz winners receive tree saplings as prizes.

Beyond academics, the organisation also works to build a drug free, corruption free, and socially responsible generation and inspire them to emerge as changemakers in future.

Faridul Islam, senior adviser of EGA

and an engineering graduate from Buet, said, "EGA is a unique initiative to promote education among underprivileged students in the riverine shoal areas, enhance their self-confidence, and pave way for raising social awareness and transformation."

Mehedi Hasan Swapno, the platform's general secretary and a student of Chittagong University, said, "Our commitment is to bring the light of education to every home in the remote shoal areas."

EGA president Muddachsir Rahman, a student of Dhaka University, added, "Education is the key for a person to overcome limitations and achieve success. From the Jamuna shoals, we are proving that when youth rise with purpose, even the smallest spark can ignite a revolution."

Md Faridul Islam, a guardian and social activist, said, "I see hope in EGA's vision of nurturing a generation of confident and conscious youth. When education and empathy walk together, true progress begins."

## Fire at Gazipur jhut warehouse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A fire broke out at a jhut warehouse in the Konabari area of Gazipur early yesterday.

The fire started at the godown of Yasin Enterprise at around 4:00am.

Five units of the fire service were working on the site to extinguish the blaze.

Confirming the matter, Saiful Islam, in-charge of the Konabari Fire Service and Civil Defence Station, told The Daily Star, "Our units were immediately sent to the spot. Currently, the fire is largely under control..."

Fire service sources said the fire spread quickly due to the huge amount of jhut (garment waste) and flammable materials stored in the godown. However, it was initially learnt that the fire did not spread to any nearby homes or factories. No casualties have been reported so far.



## Woman, child killed as truck hits car in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A woman and her 10-month-old daughter were killed, and two others injured, when a truck rammied into a parked car on the Dhaka-Tangail highway in Mirzapur upazila of Tangail yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Sadia Kabir, 32, wife of Jisan Kabir Pipur of Sonagazi upazila in Feni, and her daughter, Tajri Kabir Priyam.

The family lived in Mirpur, Dhaka, police said. Gorai Highway Police Station Officer-in-Charge Sarwar Alam told The Daily Star that the private car, carrying several passengers, was travelling towards Dhaka from the northern region.

When the car stopped by the roadside in the Gorai area, a truck coming from behind hit it, killing the woman and her child, the OC said.

The injured, including the car driver, were admitted to a hospital, he added.

## ZILA SCHOOL ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

# James concert foiled in Faridpur as clashes leave 25 injured

STAR REPORT

A concert by popular Bangladeshi rock icon James, also known as Nagar Baul, was cancelled last night following clashes on the Faridpur Zila School campus during the institution's 185th anniversary celebrations, leaving at least 25 people injured.

The concert was scheduled to begin around 9:30pm on the school grounds as the closing event of the two-day programme, reports UNB.

However, moments before the performance, a group of outsiders allegedly attempted to force their way into the venue after being denied entry.

According to locals, the agitators hurled bricks and stones and attempted to take control of the stage. Students of Faridpur Zila School resisted, forcing the attackers to retreat.

Around 10:00pm, Dr Mustafizur Rahman Shamim, convener of the organising committee, announced from the stage that the concert had been cancelled following instructions from the Faridpur deputy commissioner, citing the volatile situation.

Rajibul Hasan Khan, convener of the publicity and media sub-committee of the anniversary programme, said all preparations had been in place to ensure a successful concert, but the sudden attack led to chaos. He said

around 25 students of the school were injured by brickbats.

Considering the overall situation and on the directive of the district administration, the organisers were compelled to cancel the event, he added.

The two-day celebration began on Thursday morning with the hoisting of national and commemorative flags, the rendition of the national anthem, oath-taking, and a colourful procession through the town featuring banners, festoons, and horse-drawn carriages.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

The programme was scheduled to conclude last night with a raffle draw, cultural events, and James' performance. Established in 1840 during British rule, Faridpur Zila School is one of the earliest government schools in the region. For 185 years, the institution has played a significant role in the area's education, culture, and social movements, maintaining its reputation as one of the region's leading schools.

## Green crops replace

FROM PAGE 3

Raw peanuts sell for Tk 2,000-2,500 per maund, while dried peanuts fetch Tk 4,500-5,000 per maund. In contrast, tobacco prices fluctuate sharply and unsold leaves often go to waste, said farmer Kaising Ong.

Environmental activist Lelung Khumi said promoting green crops instead of tobacco in hilly areas such as Thanchi could significantly reduce deforestation while ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

He added that government support through training, quality seeds and improved market access could further accelerate the transition away from tobacco cultivation.

According to the upazila

agriculture office, Thanchi has 12,973 hectares of cultivable land, around 90 percent of which lies along the Sangu river and adjoining areas.

Official data show a steady decline in tobacco cultivation over the past five years. In 2020-21, tobacco covered 85 percent of the net cultivable land. This fell to around 30 percent in 2025-26.

"We work year-round with marginal farmers to discourage tobacco cultivation and promote green crops like peanuts, mustard and watermelon. Farmers are responding positively, and production is improving," said Md Wali Hossain Suman, upazila agriculture officer of Thanchi.

## LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH  
HIGH COURT DIVISION (STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)  
COMPANY MATTER NO. 523 OF 2025

1. Saad Textile Processing Ltd. (Transferee-Petitioner)  
2. Isa Washing Ltd. (Transferor-Petitioner)

-VERSUS-

Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (Respondent)  
Notice is hereby given to all concerned that an application under Section 228 read with Section 229 of the Companies Act, 1994, being Company Matter No. 2161 of 2025, for sanctioning the Scheme of Amalgamation for the amalgamation of Saad Textile Processing Ltd. (the "Transferee - Petitioner") with Isa Washing Ltd. (the "Transferor - Petitioner"), whereby the entire undertaking of the Transferor-Petitioner as a going concern is proposed to be transferred and vested in the Transferee-Petitioner, with the Transferee-Petitioner being the surviving entity, was filed and moved before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. After preliminary hearing, Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel, the Hon'ble Justice of the High Court Division, vide Order dated 3rd December 2025, was pleased to admit the application and directed the Petitioners to convene separate meetings of all shareholders and creditors of the Petitioners for the purpose of placing the Scheme of Amalgamation before them and obtaining their approval. The Hon'ble Court further directed the Petitioners to file an Affidavit-in-Compliance on or before 3rd February 2026. Pursuant to the said Order, all members and creditors of the Petitioner companies are hereby requested to attend the meetings at Gawsia Kashiem Center (1st Floor), 10/2 Arambag, Motijheel, Dhaka, Bangladesh, on the following dates and times for the purpose of considering, and if thought fit, approving the Scheme of Amalgamation proposed to be made between the Transferee-Petitioner and Transferor-Petitioner: Shareholders meeting of Saad Textile Processing Ltd. will be held on date 21/01/2026 at 11.00 A.M and creditors meeting on date 22/01/2026 at 11.30 A.M Shareholders meeting of Isa Washing Ltd. will be held on date 21/01/2026 at 3.00 P.M and creditors meeting on date 22/01/2026 at 3.30 P.M. All members and creditors are requested to attend the said meetings either in person or through a duly appointed proxy or authorized representative by completing the prescribed proxy form or authorization letter. Any person interested in contesting the application may appear before the Hon'ble High Court Division in person or through an Advocate on the date of hearing. A copy of the application and the Scheme of Amalgamation may be collected from the registered offices of the Petitioner companies.  
Yours faithfully,  
Md. Shamim Darji, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh, Mobile No. 0137548831, Address: Ain Pal, Suite # 118, Meherba Plaza, 33 Topkhana Road, Purana Paltan, Dhaka-1000.

পূনঃনিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পূনঃনিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তি

তারিখ: ৯ পৌষ ১৪৩২ বঙ্গাব্দ।  
২৪ ডিসেম্বর ২০২৫ খ্রি।

বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগের আওতায় পাওয়ার সেলের বিভিন্ন প্রকল্পের মাধ্যমে ক্রয়কৃত ০৪ (চার)-টি গাড়ী "যেখানে যে অবস্থায় রয়েছে" সে অবস্থায় ভিত্তিতে বিক্রয়ের নিমিত্ত প্রকৃত গাড়ী ব্যবসায়ী/গাড়ী সরবরাহকারী/গাড়ী মেরামতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান/যে কোন ট্রেড লাইসেন্সধারী প্রতিষ্ঠান বা হালনাগাদ আয়কর সনদধারী ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে নিম্নবর্ণিত তফসিল অনুযায়ী শর্তসাপেক্ষে সীলমোহরযুক্ত খামে দরপত্র আশ্বান করা হলো।

ক্র.নং	গাড়ীর প্রকৃতি	গাড়ীর নম্বর	রেজিস্ট্রেশন সাল	গাড়ীর অবস্থান
১)	মাইক্রোবাস	ঢাকা-মেট্রো-৮-৫১-০৯৯৭	১৯৯৭	কেন্দ্রীয় ভান্ডার, বিডিও, টাঙ্গী, গাজিপুর।
২)	মাইক্রোবাস	ঢাকা-মেট্রো-৮-৫১-০৯৯৭	১৯৯৭	কেন্দ্রীয় ভান্ডার, বিডিও, টাঙ্গী, গাজিপুর।
৩)	কার	ঢাকা-মেট্রো-খ-১১-৭৮৪৭	১৯৯৭	ওয়াপদা ভবন, মতিঝিল বা/এ, ঢাকা।
৪)	জীপ	ঢাকা-মেট্রো-ঘ-১১-২৩৮৭	১৯৯৮	কেন্দ্রীয় ভান্ডার, বিডিও, টাঙ্গী, গাজিপুর।

ক্র.নং	গাড়ীর প্রকৃতি	গাড়ীর নম্বর	রেজিস্ট্রেশন সাল	গাড়ীর অবস্থান
১)	মহাগালয়/বিভাগ:	বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ, বিদ্যুৎ, জ্বালানি ও খনিজ সম্পদ মন্ত্রণালয়।		
২)	নিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রদানকারীর দপ্তর:	মহাপরিচালক, পাওয়ার সেল, বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ বিদ্যুৎ ভবন (১৪ তলা), ১ নবাব আব্দুল গনি রোড, ঢাকা-১০০০।		
৩)	দরপত্র সংগ্রহ পদ্ধতি:	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (ওটিএম)		
৪)	দরপত্রের সিডিউলের মূল্য:	নগদ ৫০০/- (পৌচশত) টাকা প্রতি গাড়ীর জন্য (অফেরৎ যোগ্য)।		
৫)	দরপত্রের বিবরণ:	বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ কর্তৃক গঠিত কমিটির মাধ্যমে অক্রেজো ঘোষিত পাওয়ার সেলের বিভিন্ন প্রকল্পের ০৪ (চার)-টি গাড়ী নিলামে বিক্রয়ের লক্ষ্যে দরপত্র আশ্বান।		
৬)	দরপত্র সিডিউল প্রাপ্তি ও জমাদানের স্থান:	পরিচালক (ম্যানেজমেন্ট), পাওয়ার সেল বিদ্যুৎ ভবন (১৪ তলা), ১ নবাব আব্দুল গনি রোড, ঢাকা-১০০০।		
৭)	সিকিউরিটি/জামানত:	প্রস্তাবিত দরের ১০% "মহাপরিচালক, পাওয়ার সেল" এর অনুকূলে বাংলাদেশের যে কোন তফসিলি ব্যাংক হতে পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট হিসেবে দরপত্রাবের সাথে সংযুক্ত করতে হবে।		
৮)	দরপত্র আশ্বানকারীর নাম, পদবী ও ঠিকানা:	জনাব এ.জে.এম. এরশাদ আহসান হাবিব মহাপরিচালক, পাওয়ার সেল বিদ্যুৎ ভবন (১৪ তলা), ১ নবাব আব্দুল গনি রোড, ঢাকা-১০০০ ফোন: ০২-২২৩৩৮৬০৪০ E-mail: dg@powercell.gov.bd		
৯)	যে কোন প্রয়োজনে:	ফোন: ০২-২২৩৩৮৯০৮২, ২২৩৩৫০৪১৫, ২২৩৩৫২৩০৮ মোবাইল: ০২৫২২-৩৩১৯২৭		
১০)	অন্যান্য:	প্রয়োজনীয় অন্যান্য তথ্যাবলি সিডিউলে উল্লেখ আছে।		

পর্যায়	দরপত্র বিক্রয় শুরুর তারিখ ও সময়	দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ সময় ও তারিখ	দরপত্রের খাম উন্মুক্তকরণের সময় ও তারিখ	মন্তব্য
১ম পর্যায়	২৮/১২/২০২৫ সময়: ১০:০০ ঘটিকা	১৫/০১/২০২৬ সময়: ০৩:০০ ঘটিকা	১৫/০১/২০২৬ সময়: ০৩:০০ ঘটিকা	যে পর্যায়ের দরপত্র গৃহিত হবে তার পরবর্তী পর্যায়ের বর্ণিত তফসিল বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।
২য় পর্যায়	১৮/০১/২০২৬ সময়: ১০:০০ ঘটিকা	০১/০২/২০২৬ সময়: ০৩:০০ ঘটিকা	০১/০২/২০২৬ সময়: ০৩:০০ ঘটিকা	
৩য় পর্যায়	০২/০২/২০২৬ সময়: ১০:০০ ঘটিকা	১৯/০২/২০২৬ সময়: ০৩:০০ ঘটিকা	১৯/০২/২০২৬ সময়: ০৩:০০ ঘটিকা	

দরপত্রের বিস্তারিত শর্তাবলী টেন্ডার সিডিউলে উল্লেখ রয়েছে। নিম্ন প্যাডে আবেদনের মাধ্যমে টেন্ডার সিডিউল ক্রয় করতে হবে। টেন্ডার সিডিউলে বর্ণিত শর্তাবলি ও তথ্যাদি এই নিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তির অংশ হিসেবে বিবেচিত হবে। উল্লেখ্য কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে দরপত্র বাতিল অথবা যে কোন সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ করার ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করেন।

(এ.জে.এম. এরশাদ আহসান হাবিব)  
যুগ্মসচিব, বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ ও মহাপরিচালক (অতিঃ দায়িত্ব)  
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## Blast at mosque in Syria's Homs kills 5; 21 hurt

REUTERS, Damascus

Five people were killed in an explosion at a mosque of the Alawite minority sect in the Syrian city of Homs yesterday, Syrian state news agency SANA said.

SANA cited Syrian Health Ministry official Najib al-Naasan as saying 21 others were wounded and that the figures were a preliminary toll, indicating they could rise.

Homs city's press office said an explosive device had detonated inside the Imam Ali bin Abi Talib Mosque and that security forces had cordoned off the area.

Local official Issam Naameh told Reuters the blast took place during Friday noon prayers, typically the busiest time for mosques.

Syrian state media SANA published footage of rescuers and security forces examining debris splayed across the mosque's green carpet.



Acehnese children pour water while visiting the Ulee Lheue mass grave, where victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami are buried, during the 21st anniversary of the disaster in Banda Aceh, Aceh province, Indonesia, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Israeli air strikes hit Lebanon's south

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli military announced a series of strikes on "Hezbollah targets" in Lebanon yesterday, including weapons depots and a training complex.

"A number of weapons storage facilities and terrorist infrastructure sites were struck, which were used by Hezbollah to advance terror attacks against the state of Israel," a military statement said.

Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA) reported a "series of airstrikes" by Israeli aircraft on mountainous areas in Nabatiyah and Jezzine districts in the south, and the Hermel district in the east of the country.

Despite a November 2024 ceasefire that was supposed to end more than a year of hostilities between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah group, Israel has continued to strike in Lebanon and has maintained troops in five areas it deems strategic.

More than 340 people have been killed by Israeli fire in Lebanon since the ceasefire.

The strikes yesterday came a day after similar Israeli attacks near the Syrian border and in southern Lebanon left three people dead.

The Israeli military had reported on Thursday it had killed a member of arch-foe Iran's elite Quds Force in a strike in Lebanon.

## UKRAINIAN PEACE DEAL

# Putin sends a signal to Trump on proposals

Zelensky-Trump meeting planned in Florida tomorrow

AGENCIES

Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy aide spoke to members of the US administration after Moscow received US proposals about a possible Ukrainian peace deal, the Kremlin said yesterday.

Kremlin foreign policy aide, Yuri Ushakov, spoke by telephone to several members of the administration of US President Donald Trump, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. He did not say when the call took place.

Putin envoy Kirill Dmitriev brought paper copies of US proposals for peace back to Moscow after a meeting in Miami at the weekend - and the details were being analysed by the Kremlin, Peskov said.

"The information was analysed, and on behalf of President Putin, contact took place between representatives of the administrations of Russia and the United States," Peskov said. "It was agreed to continue the dialogue."

When asked how the Kremlin viewed the documents, Peskov said that he did not want to comment as Russia felt making remarks in public could undermine the negotiations, reports Reuters.

Russia's Kommersant newspaper reported that Putin told some of Russia's top businessmen that he might be open to swapping some territory controlled by Russian forces in Ukraine but that he wanted the whole of Donbas.

Asked about the report, Peskov

said that the Ukrainian peace discussions were touched upon "in general" and mentioned at the meeting. He gave no further details on the details of what was discussed.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that he

drone attacks damaged Slovakia, Palau- and Liberia-flagged vessels in ports in Ukraine's Odesa and Mykolaiv regions, Ukraine's deputy prime minister said yesterday.

In recent weeks, Russia has escalated attacks on the southern Odesa region, and Ukrainian



In this photo taken on Thursday and released yesterday, a service member of the 152nd Jaeger Brigade of the Ukrainian Armed Forces walks through frosted bushes at a frontline position amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Donetsk region, Ukraine. PHOTO: REUTERS

would soon meet US leader Donald Trump, as part of efforts to end the Russian invasion, reports AFP.

"We have agreed on a meeting at the highest level - with President Trump in the near future. A lot can be decided before the New Year," Zelensky said on social media.

The latest plan would freeze the frontline and remove a requirement for Kyiv to legally renounce its bid to join Nato, Zelensky said in a briefing Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Russian overnight

officials said Moscow aimed to cut Ukraine off from the Black Sea and sow chaos among civilians.

There were no casualties in yesterday's strikes, Oleksiy Kuleba said in a statement on the Telegram messaging app, but the attacks caused power cuts and damaged elevators and civilian warehouses in the Odesa region.

Separately, Kuleba added, drones damaged a locomotive and a freight car at the northwestern Kovel railway station.

## WEST BANK

## Israeli soldier rams vehicle into Palestinian

REUTERS, Jerusalem

An Israeli reservist soldier rammed his vehicle into a Palestinian man as he prayed on a roadside in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, after earlier firing shots in the area, the Israeli military said.

"Footage was received of an armed individual running over a Palestinian individual," it said in a statement, adding the individual was a reservist and his military service had been terminated.

The reservist acted "in severe violation of his authority" and his weapon had been confiscated, the military said. Israeli media reported that he was being held under house arrest.

The Israeli police did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. The Palestinian man went to hospital for checks after the attack, but was unhurt and is now at home.

Video which aired on Palestinian TV and was verified by Reuters shows a man in civilian clothing with a gun slung over his shoulder driving an off-road vehicle into a man praying on the side of the road.

This year was one of the most violent on record for Israeli civilian attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank, according to United Nations data that shows more than 750 injuries.

## Saudi air raids hit Yemen's Hadramawt

Say UAE-backed separatists

AFP, Al Mukalla

UAE-backed separatists accused Saudi Arabia, the main backer of Yemen's internationally-recognised government, of striking their positions in Hadramawt yesterday, a day after the kingdom urged them to return recently-seized territory.

There were no immediate reports of casualties in the air strikes, which raised fears of escalation after years of relative quiet in a conflict that has for more than a decade drawn in regional players such as Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The separatist advances have added pressure on ties between regional powers Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which support rival groups within Yemen's internationally-recognised government.

The government is a patchwork of groups, including the separatists, held together by their opposition to the Iran-backed Houthis.

"The Saudi Air Force bombed positions of the Hadrami Elite Forces in Wadi Nabb in Hadramawt," the separatist-affiliated Aden Independent Channel said in a social media post, referring to a group within the separatist faction.

They shared a video that showed a plume of smoke rising from the desert, with four-wheel white cars in the foreground. In December, the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council expelled other government forces and their allies from large parts of the country.



## Make more missiles in 2026

### N Korea's Kim orders factories; Seoul to ease access to N Korean paper

AFP, Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has ordered officials to step up production of missiles and construct more factories to meet his military's growing need for the projectiles, state media said yesterday.

Pyeongyang has significantly increased missile testing in recent years - aimed, analysts say, at improving precision strike capabilities, challenging the United States as well as South Korea, and testing weapons before exporting them to key ally Russia.

In a visit to munitions factories accompanied by top officials, the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said Kim had ordered the factories to prepare for a busy year ahead.

The North Korean leader said they needed "to further expand the overall production capacity" to keep pace with demand from Pyongyang's armed forces and ordered the building of new munitions plants, KCNA reported.

"The missile and shell production sector is of paramount importance in bolstering up the war deterrent," Kim said.

Meanwhile, South Korea said yesterday it will reclassify North Korea's long-banned state newspaper as general information, easing public access, in the latest overture from the administration of dovish President Lee Jae Myung.

North Korea and Russia have drawn closer since Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine nearly four years ago.



Displaced Sudanese react after spending the night in Gedaref city, eastern Sudan, yesterday, after the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) took control of the Heglig area in western Sudan. PHOTO: AFP

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## Oversight without independence?

Replacing NTMC won't matter if government retains the helm

The Bangladesh Telecommunication (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025—approved on Wednesday by the council of advisers—appears to be little more than a repackaging of existing frameworks and practices, embellished with cosmetic changes. While the proposed dismantling of the controversial National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC) is a long-awaited and widely supported step, its replacement with a body vested with nearly identical powers and under similar government control renders the reform largely superficial. Under the ordinance, a new entity, called the Centre for Information Support (CIS), would be established within the home ministry, effectively continuing the NTMC's role as an intelligence-gathering arm of the state responsible for internal security and law enforcement.

Reports indicate that the ordinance introduces a three-member "quasi-judicial council" tasked with reviewing, approving, amending, or rejecting interception requests. However, as the council is to be chaired by the minister of law, justice and parliamentary affairs, and will include the principal staff officer as well as the secretary of the home ministry as members, the ordinance effectively expands the government's ability to deploy surveillance against its citizens. It is difficult to believe that such a body could operate independently, free from political or institutional influence.

For years, the NTMC has faced criticism for alleged human rights violations and for facilitating illegal and unregulated surveillance, including enforced disappearances carried out by various security and law enforcement agencies. The Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances has also documented the NTMC's involvement in several such cases in detail. Yet the new draft ordinance largely overlooks concerns repeatedly raised by human rights defenders. Expecting aggrieved individuals to seek redress through a so-called quasi-judicial council composed of senior government officials is neither convincing nor reassuring.

Although the ordinance includes some positive measures—such as banning internet shutdowns and criminalising unauthorised interception, data collection, retention, and misuse—it still falls far short of meaningful reform that aligns with international human rights obligations. Provisions promoting transparency in interception approvals and requiring council decisions to be auditable are commendable. However, so long as the government retains full control over the oversight mechanism, these measures risk becoming ineffectual. The replacement of the NTMC, coupled with the expanded scope of surveillance and weakened accountability in the approved draft, requires urgent reconsideration.

A genuinely independent oversight body with quasi-judicial authority can only exist when government functionaries are excluded from its composition. The original proposal—calling for one representative nominated by the president, one by the prime minister, and one by the speaker of parliament, alongside a retired High Court Division judge and a retired district and sessions judge—should be reinstated. Without such safeguards, the CIS risks becoming not a reform but a regression, potentially even more concerning than the NTMC it seeks to replace.

## Corruption threatens clean energy drive

TIB study on solar power projects raises concerns

The transition to clean energy has emerged as an urgent priority for Bangladesh, yet it is disheartening to learn of rampant corruption and exploitation within the sector. A recent Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) study has revealed that around TK 250 crore has been siphoned off through corruption in land acquisition and compensation in five solar projects, with irregularities spanning every stage from approval to completion. The study also highlights a significant gap between official cost estimates and actual spending.

These projects were designed to deliver affordable clean power and are already in operation. Landowners interviewed for the study alleged that coercive measures were used to pressure them to sell land at dismally low prices, and in some cases, they did not receive their promised compensation at all. Another six projects examined by the TIB show that their combined cost was TK 6,970 crore, far above the TK 4,043 crore that would have been expected as per the Bangladesh Power Development Board's estimate of the average costs of setting up solar plants. In other words, about TK 2,926 crore was overestimated compared to actual costs. Alarmingly, the study has found that the average electricity tariff of these projects is about \$0.124 per kilowatt-hour, which is significantly higher than tariffs in our neighbouring countries.

According to the TIB, a syndicate of plant officials, local land registration officials, union and upazila land office staff, middlemen, local public representatives, and even members of parliament were involved in the corruption. From the outset, vested interest groups exerted influence over policymaking and strategy formulation. The same networks reappeared during land acquisition and environmental clearance, leading to coordinated manipulation of compensation, leasing arrangements, and approval processes.

Such story of corruption during Awami League's tenure is widely known, but its impact on the renewable energy sector should particularly alarm policymakers. Renewables now account for about five percent of total generation capacity, with solar contributing more than 80 percent of that share. Solar remains a largely untapped resource to this day. Experts note that diversifying our solar approaches—such as floating photovoltaics, agrivoltaics, and advanced PV technologies—can expand capacity without displacing farmers or inflating costs, which can also address a lot of the irregularities identified by the study.

The interim government has set ambitious targets to raise the share of renewables to 20 percent by 2030 and 30 percent by 2041. But intention or initiation alone cannot deliver results. Current and future authorities must ensure proper execution as well. Land acquisition processes must be transparent, project costs must be subjected to timely review, and tariffs must be determined fairly. The promise of solar power will only be real if it meets proper planning and execution.

# Persistent violence threatens our democratic transition



Anu Muhammad  
is a former professor of economics at  
Jahangirnagar University.

ANU MUHAMMAD

In the early hours of December 19, horrific attacks were carried out on Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, and later on two cultural organisations, Chhayanaut and Udichi, along with Nalonda School. These incidents mark an unprecedented episode in Bangladesh's recent history. The attackers entered the buildings and deliberately destroyed documents, equipment, and valuable archives. There was widespread looting as well. Inside The Daily Star building, the lives of journalists and others, women and men alike, were put in grave danger. When New Age Editor Nurul Kabir tried to go inside to help rescue those trapped, he too was attacked. At the same time, a violent madness was unleashed against several institutions, homes, and individuals across different parts of the country. Bangladesh has rarely witnessed such a coordinated outbreak of violence against its cultural/intellectual heartlands.

As unthinkable as these events may seem, they were by no means sudden. For quite some time now, certain institutions have been repeatedly targeted through misleading information and aggressive rhetoric, with clear attempts to incite the public. These provocations came both from within the country and from abroad. It is therefore inconceivable that the government, intelligence agencies, or those who regularly monitor the situation were unaware of what was unfolding. The effort to manufacture tension and to create, or legitimise, an environment conducive to organised violence was unmistakable.

Following the killing of Inquilab Mancha leader Sharif Osman Hadi, this group became even more active in exploiting the situation. Yet within hours of the attempt on Hadi's life, ordinary citizens were analysing CCTV footage on social media and identifying suspects. Footage was collected and examined to determine who carried out the attack and how it was executed. At that time, however, no visible initiative came from the intelligence agencies or government

forces to shed light on the situation.

Instead, it was first claimed that the killer had crossed the border into India. Later, police statements suggested that there was no specific information confirming whether the accused had actually gone to India. Capitalising on this ambiguity and confusion after



PHOTO COLLAGE: STAR

Hadi's death, one act of destruction occurred after another, targeting pre-selected institutions and individuals.

After Hadi's death, intelligence agencies should have anticipated what kind of reaction might follow and who might seek to exploit the situation. On social media, some individuals, including certain leaders of a section of Islami Chhatra Shibir, were openly calling for violence. Other forms of provocation were also underway. None of this should have been unknown to the intelligence agencies. Yet, despite having so much information, such horrific incidents were allowed to unfold.

These attacks did not happen in a vacuum. For months, we have seen a pattern of shocking inaction by the government despite prior intelligence. We have also seen similar provocations leading to assaults on shrines, attacks on Baul singers, violence against minority communities, threats against women, obstruction of cultural activities, pressure on theatre and

music events, and attempts to shut down performances. Those involved have exerted immense pressure on artists and cultural practitioners. The same group has been linked to these acts time and again. They have been able to continue this violence because the government has so far failed to take effective action against the real perpetrators.

As a result, they now feel empowered, convinced that they can say and do whatever they please. We have seen instigators operating from abroad spreading violent hatred for months, openly calling for vandalism, terror, and attacks. What is astonishing is that, in many cases, when attacks are carried out in response to such

incidents, no action has been taken against the main instigators.

This points to a clear continuity in the government's role. That continuity suggests a certain leniency—and covert patronage—towards those who pursue discriminatory politics, spread terror and hatred in the name of religion or patriotism, and seek to obstruct democratic transition. Sometimes they have been benignly described as "pressure groups" in alleged attempts to legitimise them. No effective measures have been taken. As a result, terrorist activities erupted and continued in various parts of the country. In another case, the brutal killing of worker Dipu Chandra Das in Bhaluka—beaten mercilessly, set on fire, and hung from a tree on a false allegation of blasphemy—has been a horrifying experience for us all. In Lakshmipur, a BNP leader's home was locked and set ablaze, killing his seven-year-old daughter. These incidents are happening because the attackers assume that the government is on their side, or that there is no effective government at all.

In this context, it is worth recalling that not long ago, at the ceremony marking the signing of the July Charter, the chief adviser said that Bangladesh was entering a phase of "civilisation." Are these brutal acts examples of that "civilisation?"

In fact, those who are creating this savage, hateful, and violent situation are enemies of Bangladesh's democratic transition, enemies of the Liberation War, and enemies of the 2024 mass uprising. They want to push the dream of a discrimination-free Bangladesh in the opposite direction. They oppose women's independent participation, oppose cultural expression, and seek to suppress free and lively intellectual activities.

They want to create a society where people exist like robots and where violence is inflicted on those who differ in opinion, religion, gender, or identity. This experience delivers a stark message: years of authoritarian rule, plunder, and political opportunism have produced a dangerous, violent force within society. Without confronting this force, a democratic transition is impossible, and progress towards a discrimination-free Bangladesh cannot be achieved. To do so, united action by all democratic forces is essential—resisting discriminatory extremist forces at every level and expanding people-oriented intellectual, cultural, and political engagement.

## Tarique Rahman's return and the weight of expectation

Azman Rahman  
is a political commentator.

AZMAN RAHMAN

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman's return to Bangladesh marks a new chapter in his political life—a new innings that also reflects a broader transition towards second-generation leadership in national politics. His return matters not because of the size of the crowd that gathered to welcome him on Thursday, but because of the condition he returned to. For one and a half years, the political system operated with a visible absence at its centre. Leadership was often remote, authority fragmented, and accountability blurred. His return does not automatically alter these realities; it alters how people read them. It creates assurance where there had been uncertainty, and expectation where there had been drift.

After landing at Dhaka airport, he walked barefoot on the soil of his country after 17 years in exile, before going on to address a mammoth gathering. His message was brief: "I have a plan," he said. What followed was not explanation but repetition. Again and again, he returned to a single phrase: a secure Bangladesh. This emphasis was likely deliberate. Rather than offering a range of promises, he narrowed the focus to a single, overarching governing concern of the moment.

Political leaders repeat what they want the public to measure them against. In the present context, the security imperative is not an abstract ambition; it reflects a widely felt absence. Lawlessness has spread, mob behaviour has all but normalised, and enforcement has failed to keep pace.

So by repeatedly invoking peace and security, he framed the crisis not as ideological or developmental, but as basic and immediate. The logic implied sequence rather than solution: order must come before reform, and safety must precede stability.

Equally important was what he did not say. There was no language of revenge, no denunciation of rivals, no appeal to grievance. This absence

reduced, if not eliminated. People feel assured that someone is now on the ground and claiming responsibility, even if his claim has yet to be tested.

That assurance also feeds expectations about the upcoming election. For months, we have seen the political momentum stall amid leadership ambiguity. Khaleda Zia's withdrawal from active politics left party supporters uncertain, and

are a crucial part of their intended life trajectory.

Inside the party, however, assurance alone will not be enough. Leadership presence can improve order and discipline, but only if authority is properly and judiciously exercised. The BNP's recent record, marked by allegations of extortion and indiscipline following the July 2024 uprising, remains a source of concern. So, public trust will not be rebuilt through symbolism alone. Any commitment to a secure Bangladesh will be judged first by the internal conduct of party members.

Expectations beyond the party are already elevated. Many now assume that the election will indeed be held on time and return BNP to power with Tarique Rahman at its helm. This assumption raises hope which can help stabilise public mood in a context of insecurity. But it can also magnify disappointment if results do not follow.

Seventeen years of exile appear to have shaped a more measured political tone. The "plan" he refers to was likely developed through years of conversation with party workers, professionals, and citizens, even while he lived abroad. These discussions are reflected in the BNP's 31-point agenda, covering education, governance, and climate policy, among others. We will see how this plays out going forward.

In short, Tarique Rahman's return has not changed conditions on the ground; it has changed how many think about the future. What exists now is hope and assurance. Whether that hope hardens into trust will depend on actions that have yet to be taken. Until that happens, this will remain a new political chapter whose outcome remains very much up in the air.



Tarique Rahman addressing a gathering following his return from exile after 17 years, on December 25, 2025.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

did not change political conditions, but it helped reshape perceptions. In moments of uncertainty, rhetoric functions as reassurance. By avoiding a confrontational tone and returning instead to the measured language of security, he projected restraint. It conveyed a message of focused determination without promising immediate outcomes.

This matters because Bangladesh is passing through a period defined by anxiety and unpredictability. Public frustration is driven less by contested ideas than by a sense of insecurity. In such conditions, clarity of purpose can calm frayed nerves. Tarique Rahman's return has produced a sense of calm because unpredictability has been

doubts over Tarique Rahman's return deepened that uncertainty. His presence resolves the question of party leadership without resolving the question of outcome. It also allows people to imagine a path forward.

Within the BNP, this moment also signals a generational transition. Tarique represents second-generation leadership in a party long shaped by its founding figures. He is often described as a figure of pride for the party's younger supporters. This demographic reality matters. Younger voters generally tend to be less patient with disorder and less tolerant of the powers that be. Their expectations are practical rather than ideological. For them, security and predictability

# Election is not the real story, what counts is how it is conducted



**BLOWIN' IN THE WIND**

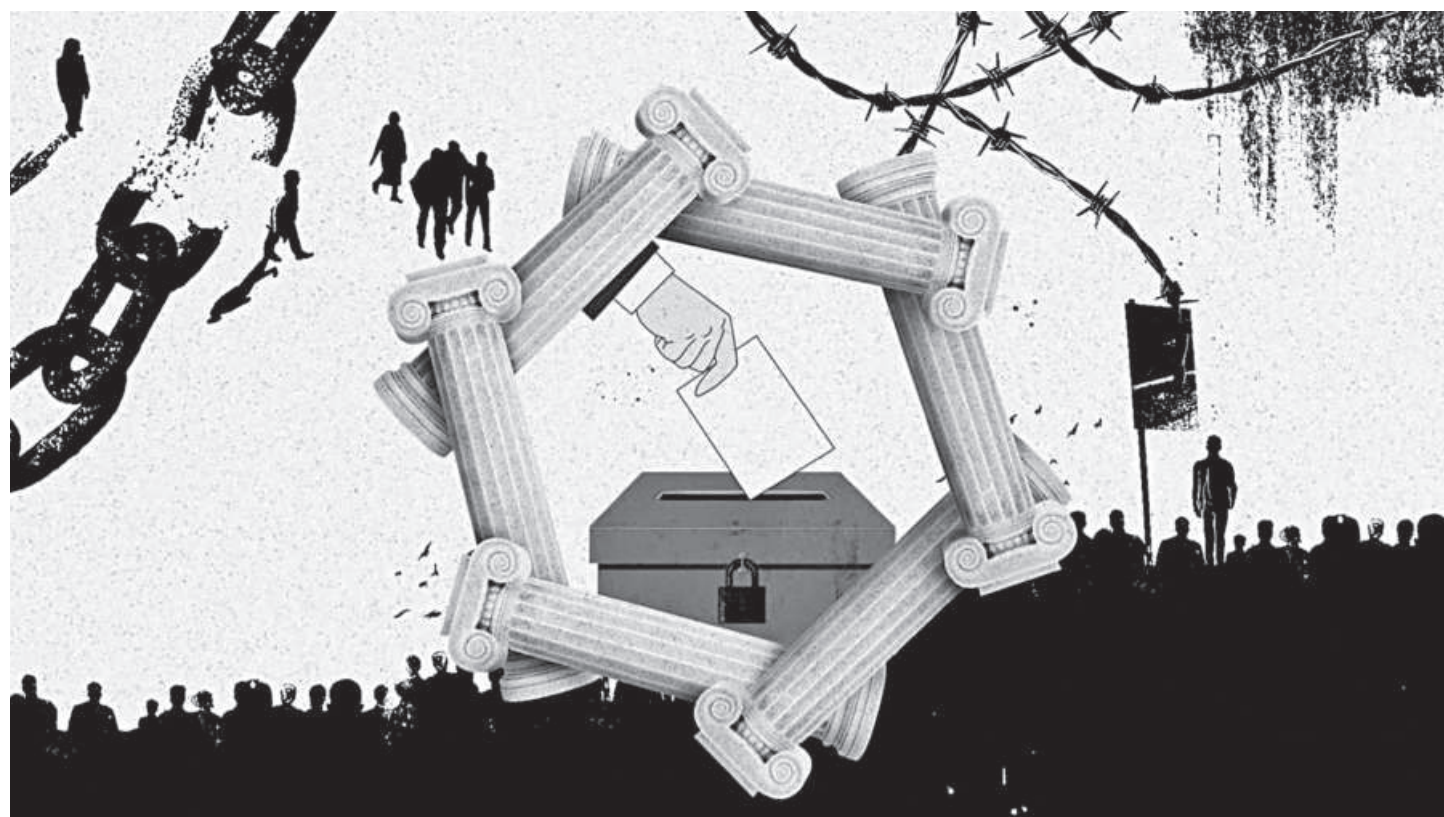
Dr Shamsad Mortuza  
is a professor of English at Dhaka University.

**SHAMSAD MORTUZA**

By now, we all know that February 12 is election day, and BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman's return after 17 years in exile has added December 25 as another date to remember. In some circles, the big showdown witnessed on Thursday has been pitted against the large turnout at the funeral of July warrior Sharif Osman Hadi on December 20, turning both into rallying points. Dates and rallies consume us as a nation. There are also rumours circling about secret alliances and overt and covert operations. But the real story of the next two months will not be about dates; it will be about the execution of a free and fair election as promised by the interim government. Given that two of its advisers resigned shortly before the announcement of the election schedule in order to participate in the forthcoming polls, some concerns over the rules, the referees, and the level playing field have already been raised. The outcome of the election will largely depend on how contestation is managed.

Parties and camps long demanding overarching systemic reforms have by now shown signs of hesitation. Among them are emerging parties who have understandably struggled with organisation, candidates, finances, and grassroots reach. They redirected the momentum they gathered during the July uprising into various strands. Some among them adopted delay as a political strategy. Their programmes seem intended to buy time, shift blame, or unleash fearmongering in order to delegitimise outcomes in advance. In doing so, however, they risk losing voter confidence. While they framed election postponement as a principled stand in the name of reform, they are quietly eroding institutional timelines and delaying the transition to democracy.

All this poses an intriguing dilemma for first-time voters. The voterless elections held under the previous regime have pushed many young voters into prolonged cycles of confrontation. Their political memory is defined by an urgency to "save democracy". Yet in recent months, the electoral system's processes and protections have received



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

minimal clarity. We have seen those in charge of electoral reform meet with selected stakeholders and produce a complicated "buy one election, get one referendum free" model where voting appears as both a sacred duty and a venture into the unknown. The younger generation, whose political memory is tied to their "muscle" memory, now finds itself often subscribing to a school of thought that privileges cynicism over participation.

A wholesale rejection of the old can create problems even for those committed to change. Such an attitude makes the role of election observers more important than ever, however. Undoubtedly, we must steer clear of monitoring agents who endorsed previous flawed elections. At the same time,

participating parties and alliances must come to a consensus about credible domestic and international observation mechanisms.

The Election Commission does not have much time left to invite monitors, assign mandates, and grant meaningful access. Nobody wants symbolic reassurance from rubber-stamp observers. One way to avoid post-election chaos is to guarantee robust procedural safeguards. The interim

Despite a number of surveys, it remains difficult to predict the voting behaviour of new voters or of supporters of the previous regime who find themselves with limited choices but may still play an important role. This raises the possibility of a fractured verdict. Meanwhile, AI-driven misinformation and disinformation can be deployed to manufacture consent or divisions, further harming the democratic process. Monitoring,

streets and silenced dissenting voices over the past months is a worrying sign for the planned revival of democracy. Even student leaders have at times justified the need for showdowns, falling into the same trap that equates influence with money power, whether for nominations or for countering opponents. Perhaps the greatest concern, however, lies in the neutrality of the civil and military bureaucracy. It is important for those in charge and those on the ground to maintain quiet centrality as the ultimate stabiliser. If these institutions fail to operate within transparent oversight at all times, the election may fall short of delivering its promised outcomes.

Another pressure point involves our international partners. On paper, they all want "inclusive and credible elections." Yet we carry the lived memory of a previous regime that manipulated democracy by turning elections into a procedural theatre while some of those actors watched in silence. The challenge for the interim government will be to craft a sovereign democratic standard; it needs to carefully navigate between the "rock" of defiance and the "hard place" of compliance to rebuild institutional self-respect.

As the calendar year draws to a close, few wish to carry forward the exhaustion and anxiety of the past. People are tired. They want normalcy and stability. And this can only be achieved through discipline. All parties and stakeholders concerned must therefore return to the principles of rules, fairness, and civic courage. Democracy is not a once-in-five-years moment; it is a way of life that needs to be constantly practised across society.

As 2025 gives way to 2026, we stand at a familiar threshold where hope is battling with fear. The greatest fear is that narrow personal interests may override the national good, and that internecine clashes and infighting may pave the way for external actors to exploit our vulnerabilities for geopolitical gain. It is not too late to rebuild trust in a democratic system where people of all races, religious sects, classes, and communities feel welcome to participate. The recovery of trust can be done through the consistent application of order and justice. The task of the new year is not simply to survive another election. Election 2026 must restore meaning to the act of participation itself. This is something we owe to the generation that ushered in change, especially those voting for the first time. We must ensure their right to step into the future with pride and dignity.

therefore, must extend to all such aspects and spaces, both physical and digital.

The alleged selective flexibility shown for certain camps, combined with alleged rigidity towards others, also highlights how uneven application of rules may corrode trust faster than outright exclusion. One electoral buzzword has been "inclusivity." International pressure groups have already urged the government to include individuals or groups whose rights have not been legally revoked by courts of law. For inclusivity to be meaningful, it must be applied consistently. Otherwise, it risks becoming yet another tool of manipulation.

The road to democracy has many obstacles. The way muscle power has dominated the

government must protect voters, not merely certify an outcome. Observers must be carefully selected, empowered, and clearly defined in their scope.

The sheer desire for or taste of power, which some construe as a necessary evil, has contaminated our political culture over the years. Many of us have grown accustomed to systems and traditions averse to compromise. We need to move away from the "do whatever you can in court, the palm tree is mine" kind of mentality that has long plagued our politics. Conversely, the urge to remain within the orbit of power can drive intense pre-election backroom bargaining or executive overreach, both of which may likely cause post-election paralysis.

## Why women's financial literacy is a feminist issue



**MIND THE GAP**

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**NOSHIN NAWAL**

Bangladeshi women are very good with money. We stretch it, ration it, rescue households with it, and somehow still manage to make ends meet when the arithmetic refuses to cooperate. Yet the investment knowledge imparted to us remains largely limited to the purchase of gold jewellery. What we are far less encouraged to do is plan with money or grow it. Women in this country are taught to save—save because tomorrow might be a rainy day. We are praised for being careful, patient, and frugal. But when the conversation moves from saving to investing, the tone changes. Investing is treated as complicated and risky.

This is not a gap that can be fixed with a few tips. It is built into how women are taught to relate to money in the first place. Money is not just about income; it is about choices over time. Financial literacy is what turns income into choice. Without it, women earn, contribute, and survive, but rarely secure themselves. They remain financially responsible yet economically exposed.

For many women, this is where financial education begins and ends. Saving is

it works, what the ceiling actually is, or how it fits into a broader financial plan. Most encounter it as a vague suggestion at a bank counter, not as a financial tool explained with purpose or strategy.

Strategy, however, is rarely discussed. Very few Bangladeshi women are taught even the basics of how money behaves over time: how inflation quietly reduces the value of idle savings; why relying on a single instrument, however safe, creates its own risks; and how different tools serve different functions. Savings protect. Investments build. Pensions secure the future. Asset ownership creates leverage. All of these are parts of the same ecosystem, yet women are rarely shown the full picture.

Instead, women are nudged towards caution without being given context. This produces a generation that avoids risk but also avoids growth. Financial responsibility becomes synonymous with staying still. Social framing plays a role here. Financial ambition in women still unsettles people—not because it is abrasive, but because it disrupts

before they open their first bank account.

Even when women earn independently, their income is rarely treated as capital. It is treated as supplementary—useful and appreciated, but secondary. As a result, women earn salaries but are not encouraged to think about asset ownership. They save diligently but do not diversify. They support households but do not build independent financial cushions. This is particularly

of people, especially women, work without salaries or contracts. Yet awareness of this option remains extremely limited. Many women assume pensions are only for salaried jobs, when the law now provides a pathway for long-term income security even for those whose labour has never been formally recognised.

What does not exist is a culture of connecting these dots. Mutual funds that

might look like this: keep an emergency fund in cash; use Paribarik Sanchayapatra or fixed deposits for income stability; allocate a portion of savings to low-risk mutual funds to protect against inflation; contribute regularly, even in small amounts, to a pension scheme; and discuss insurance. Ensure at least one asset is registered in your own name. None of this is radical. It is basic financial hygiene. Yet most women are never walked through these ideas in plain language. The silence around money only compounds the problem.

There is embarrassment around not knowing and judgement around knowing too much. As a result, mistakes remain private, lessons remain isolated, and everyone assumes they are navigating decisions alone—decisions that will shape decades of their lives. This is why women's financial literacy is a feminist issue. Without it, women remain dependent longer than necessary. They delay leaving unhealthy workplaces or relationships, not because they lack courage, but because they lack financial clarity. Financial uncertainty keeps people compliant; knowledge loosens that grip.

What Bangladesh needs is more conversation, more structure and more access to clear, practical education. We need regular financial literacy workshops for women, held in community centres, universities, workplaces, and professional spaces. Not jargon-heavy seminars, but practical sessions that explain savings, investments, pensions, taxes, and asset ownership in language women can actually use—sessions that answer real questions and treat women as economic adults.

Money education should not be something women stumble upon accidentally in their thirties. It should be part of how we prepare them for adulthood. A woman who understands money understands choice. She may still choose family, caregiving, or sacrifice, but she does so knowingly. That choice must be ensured.

In a country where women already carry families through crisis after crisis, equipping them with financial knowledge is a responsibility. If feminism in Bangladesh is about dignity, then it must include money—not just earning it, but understanding its mechanisms; not just saving it, but structuring it; not just surviving on it, but using it to create room to breathe. Anything less is not empowerment.



FILE VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

dangerous in Bangladesh, where women live longer, experience career interruptions, marry later, divorce more frequently than ever before, and shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care work. In this context, not understanding how to invest becomes a long-term vulnerability.

What makes this more frustrating is that options do exist. Bangladesh has introduced a Universal Pension Scheme under the Universal Pension Management Act, 2023, administered by the National Pension Authority. It allows voluntary enrolment beyond the formal workforce and explicitly includes informal workers, the self-employed, and homemakers—particularly through the Surokkha scheme—recognising that millions

are professionally managed and designed for people who do not want to trade or speculate; preferential SME loans for women entrepreneurs under Bangladesh Bank refinancing schemes; legal inheritance rights that exist on paper but are often surrendered quietly in the name of family harmony—these are rarely discussed together. Financial literacy does not require women to become stock market experts. It requires understanding a few foundational principles: that money left idle loses value; that risk can be managed, not simply avoided; that diversification is protection, not recklessness; that income and wealth are not the same thing; and that long-term planning matters.

For many women, a sensible approach

encouraged. Take Paribarik Sanchayapatra, for instance. It is a women-only, government-backed savings certificate that allows women to invest up to Tk 45 lakh per individual, with a stable monthly income and strong capital protection. It is designed to provide financial stability, yet many women are never told how

expectations. A man who invests is assumed to be planning ahead. A woman who invests is often assumed to be experimenting. If a man loses money, it is treated as experience. If a woman loses money, it is treated as poor judgment. This difference is subtle but persistent, and women internalise it long

**Women are nudged towards caution without being given context. This produces a generation that avoids risk but also avoids growth. Financial responsibility becomes synonymous with staying still. Social framing plays a role here. Financial ambition in women still unsettles people—not because it is abrasive, but because it disrupts expectations. A man who invests is assumed to be planning ahead. A woman who invests is often assumed to be experimenting.**

# How many more deaths before mob violence is stopped?



Dipu Chandra Das with his wife and young child

**The Bhaluka incident is a textbook case of how rumour is weaponised. Criminologists identify three types of offenders in such lynchings: seasonal, habitual, and professional.**

MIFTAHUL JANNAT

One morning, in the fictional world of Franz Kafka, Josef K. awoke to find himself arrested for a crime he did not commit, by an organisation he did not understand. "Someone must have been telling lies about Josef K.," the novel begins; "he knew he had done nothing wrong but, one morning, he was arrested." On the night of December 18, 2025, in the very real district of Bhaluka in Mymensingh, a garment worker named Dipu Chandra Das was thrust into a similarly irrational and lethal machinery. While Josef K.'s journey ended in a quiet quarry, Dipu's ended on a national highway median,

amid a spectacle of fire and fury. His death exposes a haunting reality: when the rule of law vanishes and impunity prevails, the world becomes a stage where innocence is no defence against a predetermined verdict.

## CASTE, CLASS, AND THE MAKING OF A TARGET

Throughout *The Trial*, K. is never informed of his specific crime. The horror of Dipu Das's death began with an identical void of evidence. A mob accused him of making derogatory remarks about Islam on Facebook, but the claim quickly collapsed under scrutiny. The Company Commander of RAB-14 in Mymensingh later confirmed

that "no evidence was found" on the deceased's social media. Furthermore, other workers and local people could not point to any specific activity that justified the mob's "righteous" fury. The "crime" was a phantom — a rumour that metamorphosed into a death sentence before a single fact could be verified.

But beneath the surface of religious fervour lay a more calculated motive. Dipu was a member of the Rabidas community, a Dalit group traditionally engaged in leatherwork and historically associated with the so-called 'Chamar' caste. In Bangladesh, the Rabidas face crushing social stigma. According to Shipon Kumar Rabidas, General Secretary of the Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM), the killing was driven by a mix of workplace rivalry and entrenched caste bias.

"Our fact-finding suggests that both professional jealousy and deep-seated caste prejudice played a role," he said. "Dipu was degree-passed and had been nominated for a supervisor position at the factory. This reportedly triggered resentment among three co-workers who had allegedly paid bribes for the same post and could not tolerate a person from a so-called 'lower' caste rising to such a position."

Unable to compete on merit, they weaponised the most volatile tool available in the new Bangladesh: an accusation of blasphemy. The factory, rather than acting as a guardian, "forcibly pushed out" Dipu to appease the gathering crowd. It was an act of institutional betrayal that mirrored Kafka's *Before the Law* — closing the door of safety on a man whose life depended on it.

## THE SPECTACLE OF VIOLENCE AND DISSECTING THE MOB

What remains most baffling is how the murder morphed into a public

performance — filmed, shared on social media, and reduced to spectacle. Dipu was stripped, beaten, hung from a tree, and set on fire. Criminologists point to this as a breakdown of social order. Md Rezaul Karim Shohag, an Assistant Professor of Criminology at Dhaka University, notes that this phenomenon is fuelled by a failure of deterrence.

He draws on the 'Broken Windows Theory' to explain that visible signs of disorder and unpunished minor crimes lead to more serious offences. "When people see that crimes are committed without legal consequences, they feel empowered to act on personal grievances or take advantage of the chaos." In Bangladesh, "likely offenders" are often waiting for an opportunity, and the current absence of legal guardianship — that is, effective law enforcement — allows them to act on their targets, according to him.

The Bhaluka incident is a textbook case of how rumour is weaponised. Criminologists identify three types of offenders in such lynchings: seasonal, habitual, and professional. In Dipu's case, "professional" offenders likely orchestrated the rumour to settle a workplace grudge, while "habitual" and "seasonal" offenders joined the fray, shielded by the anonymity of the crowd.



Dipu Chandra Das

## WHO BEARS RESPONSIBILITY — AND WHAT MUST CHANGE

Who should bear responsibility for Dipu Das's killing? The men who took part in the lynching? The factory authorities who pushed him out to face the mob? Or a state whose indifference and delayed responses have allowed mob violence to flourish?

Each lynching is followed by a familiar promise from the government: that it will "take responsibility for the family." The implication is unsettling. Protection appears to arrive only after

death. If the state acknowledges its duty only after a citizen is killed, what does that say about the rule of law? What does it reveal about a system that repeatedly fails to intervene, deter, or deliver justice?

Despite a string of mob attacks across the country this year, accountability remains elusive. Arrests are announced, inquiries promised, but convictions are rare and deterrence weaker still. Who are these people being arrested? How many are actually prosecuted? And have we seen even a single instance of exemplary punishment that might signal the true cost of mob violence?

Breaking this cycle requires more than ritual condemnation. "Law enforcement must intervene early and decisively, ensuring that accusations — however inflammatory — are handled strictly through legal channels," said Md Rezaul Karim Shohag. "At the same time, political actors must abandon selective outrage and close ranks across ideological lines to reject mob violence unequivocally." Without institutional unity and credible punishment, awareness campaigns alone will achieve little.

The murder of Dipu Das follows a blood-stained trail of names we are already beginning to forget: Tofazzal, Ruplal Rabidas, or the man in Bhola whose eyes were gouged out and thumb severed on mere suspicion of theft. Each time, the shock fades. Each time, impunity survives.

If the "new Bangladesh" is to be more than a rhetorical reset, it must confront situations in which mobs replace courts and rumours substitute for evidence. Bob Dylan once asked, "How many deaths will it take till he knows that too many people have died?" In Bangladesh, the answer is not blowing in the wind — it is written in case files that go nowhere, trials that never begin, and a silence screaming louder at our collective conscience with every life erased.

Miftahul Jannat is a journalist at *The Daily Star*.

# CHAR HAATS

## The unequal economics of the chars

S DILIP ROY

In the middle of the Brahmaputra River, far from paved roads and permanent markets, lies the remote char of Daikhawa under Begumganj Union in Ulipur upazila of Kurigram. Life here is shaped by sand, silt, and uncertainty. For 65-year-old Javed Ali, a farmer, each year begins with a question: how much land will the river leave behind?

On the shifting sands of the char, Javed grows paddy, maize, jute, kaun (foxtail millet), wheat, chhena (proso millet), lentils, and whatever else the land allows. Some years, erosion takes away his fields; in others, fresh silt creates new plots. Around 70 families live on Daikhawa char, all dependent on agriculture. Crop cultivation and livestock rearing are their only means of survival.

Growing food on the char is arduous, but selling it is often harder.

There is no permanent market nearby. When harvest time comes, farmers load sacks of grain onto boats and travel to makeshift markets that spring up along the riverbanks — the char haats. These markets operate only for a few hours each day and shift location as riverbanks erode or emerge. Here, farmers sell their produce at prices lower than those in mainland markets, while buying essentials at higher rates.

"We suffer more trying to sell our produce than we do growing it," Javed Ali said. "We bring our harvest by boat to the char market, only to sell it at low prices. Due to the lack of transport, we can't go to markets on the mainland. And we have to buy essentials from

char markets at higher prices."

According to him, farmers sell their crops at 8–10 percent less than mainland prices and buy goods at 8–10 percent more. "That loss stays with us every season," he said.

For char residents, this unequal exchange is not new. Azgor Ali Mondol, 75, another farmer from Daikhawa, said char markets have existed for generations. "These markets are temporary. Depending on the riverbank's condition, they pop up on different chars at different times. Traders from the mainland bring goods to sell and also buy products from us. We come here by boat."

"Selling at low prices and buying at high prices has become our norm," he added quietly. "We've accepted it. This is our fate."

The scale of this system is vast. According to the Kurigram Char Development Committee, more than 650 chars lie along the Brahmaputra, Teesta, and Dudhkumar rivers across Kurigram, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, and Rangpur. Kurigram alone has about 450 chars on the Brahmaputra. Despite their remoteness, these chars are served by just 18–20 char markets. Every day, thousands of farmers depend on these haats.

At the Jorgachh char market on the Brahmaputra in Chilmari upazila, activity begins before sunrise. By noon, the market disappears as quickly as it forms. Nadim Mondol, 55, a farmer from Montola char, arrives early with his produce.

"Mainland markets open after noon, but char markets start at sunrise and end by noon," he said. "We prepare



PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Traders and farmers conduct business at Jorgachh Char Haat, a temporary market held on the Brahmaputra riverbed in the Char Jorgachh area of Kurigram's Chilmari upazila.

early in the morning, sell our goods, buy what we need, and return home by boat."

Each char market typically sees 1,000–1,200 farmers bringing their produce. Around 150–200 traders attend. Despite its temporary nature, a single market can see transactions worth more than Tk 1 crore in a few hours.

Traders argue that the price difference reflects logistics rather than exploitation. Shamsul Alam, a trader at the Jorgachh market, said produce is bought cheaper and sold dearer because of transport costs. "It's not discrimination," he said. "Horse-drawn carts are the only means of transporting goods in the chars. These

markets are 5–7 kilometres from the mainland. The cost of transporting goods by horse-drawn cart makes prices higher. That's why farmers get less for their crops and pay more for essentials."

According to him, transporting one maund of goods by horse-drawn cart costs Tk 120–150. "I've been buying produce from char markets for 39 years," he said.

Shahed Ali, a seller of agricultural inputs, echoed this view. "We bring fertilisers, seeds, pesticides, and diesel from the mainland using horse-drawn carts. If anything remains unsold, we take it back the same way. That's why we sell at higher

prices than in mainland markets. The extra charge is only for transportation."

The carts themselves are part of a fragile economy. Majidul Islam, a horse-drawn cart driver, earns Tk 1,800–2,000 a day transporting goods. Half of that income goes to feeding his horse. "I've been driving a cart for 20 years," he said.

Each char market has 50–60 such carts. Each can carry 10–12 maunds of goods. No alternative transport exists on the sandy terrain. Moving just one kilometre can take 20–25 minutes, with the driver walking beside the horse under the sun.

For development experts, char haats are both a lifeline and a symbol of inequality. Professor Shafiqul Islam Bebu, convener of the Kurigram Char Development Committee, said char residents are trapped in a cycle of disadvantage.

"They live with the constant struggle of selling at low rates and buying at high rates, along with many other inequalities," he said. "Many government and NGO projects have been implemented, but there has been no real change. Without a separate ministry for char development, their welfare is not possible."

He believes a dedicated 'Char Ministry' could help establish permanent markets, improve transport, and ensure fair prices. "Char residents are also protesting for it," he said.

S Dilip Roy is a journalist at *The Daily Star*.



Horse-drawn carts transport goods across the sandy riverbed to and from Jorgachh Char Haat on the Brahmaputra, the only means of moving produce and essentials between the chars and the mainland.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

# BREATHING DEATH

## What Bangladesh must do to tackle air pollution

MARTIN MATTISSON

Air pollution in Bangladesh is not just an environmental issue – it is a public health catastrophe. It is estimated that ambient air pollution causes 90 thousand deaths every year in Bangladesh. Imagine if an industrial accident had caused as many deaths – and that too every year. Countless more people suffer from chronic illness, lost productivity, and reduced well-being. This makes air pollution an enormous burden on the economy as well.

But this crisis is not hopeless. Drawing on recent research, including my own, and the insights I gained from working with policy-makers in Bangladesh, this article unpacks the air pollution challenge, clarifies common misconceptions, and proposes concrete steps that can address the problem. While many of these steps are at the level of policy and government action, I will also provide some practical measures that you, as an individual, could take to protect yourself and your family.

### THE PROBLEM OF AIR POLLUTION IN BANGLADESH

Air pollution in Bangladesh is among the most severe in the world. The largest health harm is caused by very small particles – those with a diameter of 2.5 micrometres or less (scientifically known as PM2.5). These particles are so small that they cannot be seen, and they can bypass our bodies' natural filters and enter our bloodstream when we inhale them.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) guideline is that there should not be more than 5 micrograms of PM2.5 per cubic metre of air (5 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), but in Bangladesh, the national average in 2023 was 62 µg/m<sup>3</sup> – 12 times higher than the WHO guideline. According to the Air Quality Life Index (AQLI), Bangladeshis lose, on average, 5.5 years of life expectancy compared to a scenario in which the WHO guideline is met. In districts such as Dhaka and Gazipur, more than seven years of life expectancy is lost.

Air pollution affects our health by increasing the risk of many conditions, including heart attacks, strokes, respiratory infections, asthma, and lung cancer. Although it is never possible to know with certainty whether a health condition in a specific individual is caused by air pollution, research has shown that air pollution increases the share of the population that suffers from and dies of these conditions.

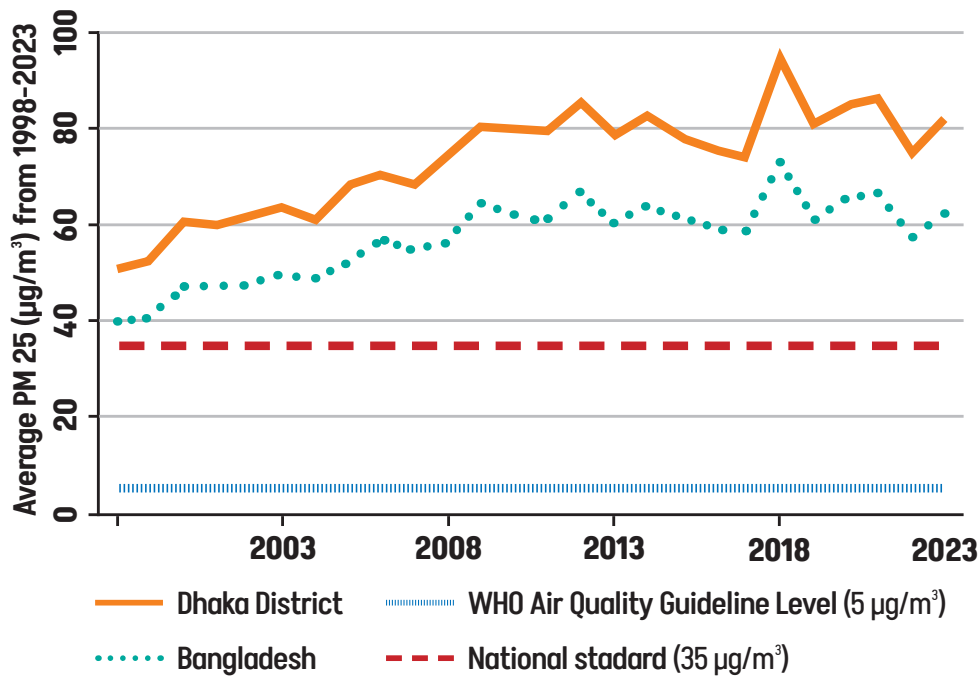
In addition to the health costs, there is increasing evidence that air pollution substantially reduces productivity in both physically and cognitively demanding jobs. This means that high levels of air pollution make us less productive and ultimately economically poorer.

### WHERE DOES THE POLLUTION COME FROM?

Scientists broadly agree on the main sources:

- Power generation (especially coal- and oil-fired power plants and diesel generators)
- Open waste burning
- Traffic (especially old buses and trucks)
- Brick kilns
- Other industries (e.g. steel mills and fertiliser plants)
- Households burning solid fuel (e.g. firewood) for cooking
- Dust from roads and construction
- Natural causes such as sea salt and soil dust
- Pollution entering Bangladesh from other countries

There is still debate among scientists about how large each of these contributing sources is. What we do know is that there is no single main



Annual air pollution averages estimated from satellite data, compared with national and WHO air quality standards. Data: van Donkelaar et al. (2021).

source that, if reduced, would allow us to solve most of the problem. Therefore, a multi-pronged approach that addresses multiple sources simultaneously will be necessary.

### COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT AIR POLLUTION

Despite the urgency of the situation, many misconceptions cloud public and policy understanding of air pollution in Bangladesh.

#### 1. Air pollution is primarily an outdoor problem

One widespread belief is that the worst air is outdoors, and that by staying inside, individuals can avoid its harms. But my co-authored research in Mirpur tells a different story. We found that indoor pollution levels are similar to those outside.

#### 2. Air pollution is mostly an urban problem

Another common misconception is that air pollution is mainly an issue for cities like Dhaka, while rural areas are safe. It is true that urban areas generally have higher pollution levels, but rural Bangladesh also experiences very high levels of air pollution. In other words, reducing air pollution is a priority for all of Bangladesh, not just urban areas.

#### 3. Trees are a simple solution

Many people believe that planting trees and keeping plants at home can meaningfully reduce particulate pollution. While green spaces offer many benefits, including some reduction in air pollution, these effects are small relative to the scale of Bangladesh's air pollution problem.

### SIX POLICY PROPOSALS TO REDUCE AIR POLLUTION

If we are to make meaningful progress, we must deploy resources where they can deliver the greatest gains in reduced air pollution at a reasonable cost. Below are my top six policy proposals that are both feasible and capable of generating large public health gains.

**1. Raise taxes and duties on highly polluting fuels such as coal, diesel, and oil.** We should tax the source of the pollution – the fuel itself – and then allow producers and consumers to determine the best alternatives, rather than having the government attempt to micro-manage the transition. In addition, these duties will raise government revenue.

**2. Phase out coal-fired brick kilns.** Almost all brick kilns in Bangladesh operate in violation of existing regulations, yet 25% of the kilns account for 50% of the health harms. The Department of Environment should prioritise enforcing regulations on the most harmful brick kilns first. These are typically kilns located upwind of large cities or those using outdated technologies. The recent announcement, and subsequent enforcement, of a brick kiln ban in Savar is a step in the right direction; many more such decisions need to be taken. As bricks become scarcer, more construction will shift to alternative materials, such as concrete blocks.

**3. Promote a shift among rural households away from burning solid fuel for cooking, and towards stoves that generate less air pollution, such as LPG gas stoves.** This would reduce both ambient air pollution and indoor pollution caused by traditional cook stoves. Indoor pollution from cook stoves is a major health crisis, affecting women in rural areas in particular. Subsidising LPG cylinders for rural households is an effective way to promote this transition.

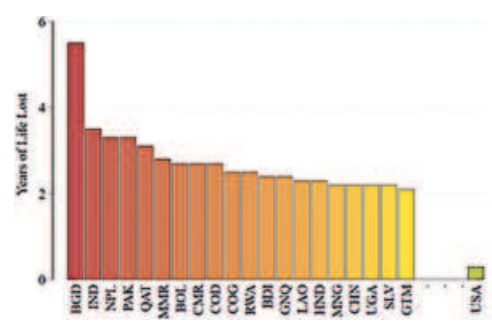
**4. Reduce reliance on coal and oil for electricity generation.** Bangladesh needs electricity to prosper, but the government should not allow any more coal- or oil-fired power plants to be built and should phase out older plants, such as Barapukuria, which lack modern equipment to clean emissions before they are released into the atmosphere. Instead, Bangladesh should make use of its substantial solar energy potential by continuing to accelerate the installation of solar panels. Furthermore, Bangladesh could import more electricity, especially from Himalayan hydropower, which is a natural complement to solar power. The existing agreement to purchase electricity from Nepal should be expanded to larger volumes, and hydropower from other sources, such as Bhutan, should also be included.

**5. Stricter enforcement of the ban on open waste burning.** Businesses and individuals who engage in open waste or crop residue burning should face stringent

finer. This practice is already banned, so implementation should be prioritised by detecting burning and holding responsible actors accountable, especially in and around densely populated urban areas. Municipal corporations also need to improve waste collection and management systems.

**6. Phase out old, polluting vehicles, especially buses and heavy trucks.** We can begin by replacing buses used for public transportation – something the government is already in the process of doing for Dhaka, but has not yet fully implemented. This needs to be implemented not only in Dhaka, but across all public transportation systems nationwide. Old trucks should also be phased out or retrofitted with catalytic converters and filters.

As can be seen from the policy proposals above, enforcement and action are the key steps, rather than introducing new laws, targets, and regulations. However, the government has limited capacity to enforce all rules simultaneously and everywhere. Therefore, I emphasise that enforcement efforts should prioritise the most harmful emission sources first – typically those located within, or just upwind of, densely populated urban areas.



Bangladesh is the country losing the most life expectancy to air pollution worldwide. Data: AQLI.

### WHAT CAN I DO?

The most common action taken to reduce exposure to air pollution is to wear a mask when outside. This can help if you are wearing an N95, KN95, or FFP2 mask; however, cloth masks or simple surgical masks do not provide substantial protection. A much more underutilised technology is air purifiers.

#### 1. Install air purifiers in your bedroom(s)

One of the most effective ways of protecting oneself and one's family is to install an air purifier in your home. Specifically, if you place an air purifier in your bedroom, close all doors and windows, and run it throughout the night while you sleep – at least during the winter months, when air pollution is at its peak. Research carried out by me and my co-authors shows that even a small air purifier reduces air pollution in a room by 80% when run on medium speed, provided doors and windows are closed. There are many good models available; the most important thing is that the purifier has a HEPA filter.

#### 2. Install air purifiers in all schools, hospitals, and indoor workplaces

The government should mandate schools to run air purifiers in classrooms with windows shut during the winter season. This will protect children,

at least while they are in the classroom. The same can be done in hospitals and indoor workplaces. In addition to the health benefits, there is suggestive evidence that better air quality improves learning among children and substantial evidence that it makes workers more productive.

### HOW DO OUR INSTITUTIONS NEED TO CHANGE?

**1. The government should focus on taking domestic action immediately, not making goals for the future or international agreements**

While transboundary pollution (i.e. pollution that drifts into Bangladesh from neighbouring countries) is real, Bangladesh should prioritise its own domestic pollution first. Most pollution originates within the country, and this is the only pollution that the government can realistically control. International agreements or pledges to meet future goals are, at best, a distraction from the important tasks at hand and, at worst, a way for policy-makers to gain credit for signing agreements rather than taking real actions that reduce pollution. We can still be inspired by other countries' successes and emulate their solutions; no international treaties or high-level political cooperation are necessary for that to happen. If each country in South Asia focuses on tackling its own emissions, cross-border pollution will also decline.

### 2. Media and civil society organisations should educate the population and promote long-term solutions

First and foremost, media and civil society organisations need to communicate the extent to which the air pollution crisis is harming us all. For instance, the media tends to focus on air pollution only when it peaks during the winter months. Unfortunately, it is not helpful to demand that the government "take action now" only once Dhaka becomes the most polluted city in the world. The truth is that there is often little the government can do on that particular day itself. The media and civil society should also ask the government what it is doing to prepare for the coming winter and the years ahead.

Expectations should also be realistic; even in China – the country that has reduced air pollution levels most rapidly – it took five years for pollution to decline by 40%. Therefore, credit should be given for steps taken in the right direction, even if the situation remains poor; otherwise, there is little incentive for politicians to address the problem.

### BANGLADESH IS READY TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM

Many countries, such as the UK, the US, and China, have substantially reduced air pollution, but this did not happen by itself. It required multiple parts of society – government, industry, media, and an engaged public – to make this a priority. I firmly believe that Bangladeshi society will rise to the occasion and that we will substantially improve our air quality.

Martin Mattsson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics at the National University of Singapore.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN/STAR



LAW REFORM

# LAW REFORM AND OUR FARMERS

## Narratives of Bangladesh's unsung heroes

SUSHMITA CHOUDHURY

In the countryside of Bangladesh, green paddy fields stretch for miles, nurtured by *Naya Krishi* farmers of Tangail. Defying modern farming, these farmers continue traditional practices by cultivating seeds passed down from their ancestors. As one *Naya Krishi* farmer proudly noted, "These seeds are the gifts of our ancestors. We know and trust one another". It is a heartfelt reminder of their commitment to continue seed autonomy.

Seed saving and exchanging, known as traditional farming, is key to farmers' right to seeds in developing countries, recognised in national and international legal frameworks. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh, the legal framework does little to acknowledge or protect these essential rights of farmers' right to seeds.

To understand the denial of farmers' right to seeds, a brief historiographical analysis is in order. Over half a century ago, it introduced high-yielding seeds, hybrids and irrigation systems developed by research institutes and seed companies, in a bid to revolutionise agriculture. A wave of modern seeds, along with pesticides, had been marketed as a 'golden key' solution to the food security challenges faced by countries like Bangladesh in the 1960s. Following the lead of India and Pakistan, as a war-torn economy, Bangladesh quickly adopted the Green Revolution in their Constitution in the wake of its independence in 1971. Article 16 of the Constitution calls for the transformation of rural life through an agricultural revolution, aiming to reduce disparities between urban and rural living standards. Although food security improved, the technological advancements have widened the schism between the rich and the poor instead of reducing the disparity as promised.

After six years of the Green Revolution's recognition in the Constitution, the introduction of the Seed Ordinance in 1977 marked a significant turning point in seed policy. It was the first seed law designed to ensure that farmers had access to high-yielding varieties, though this often came with an increasing dependence on chemical inputs. My doctoral research found that between 1977 and 2018, seed laws and policies classified farmers as seed consumers, indirectly restricted their access to their own seeds, and compelled them to purchase seeds from seed markets.

Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) have gained prominence and developing country governments face growing pressure to provide stronger IPR protections for seed innovations by corporate breeders. This often comes at the expense of traditional farming practices.

On the flip side, this scenario of farmers' significant departure from their seeds and traditional practices has sparked worries among farmers' rights groups. Their concerns have fuelled the emergence

of my PhD project, Farida Akter, founder of *Naya Krishi* Farming Movement and advisor to the Bangladesh government, rightly revealed, "We do not know how and when the law was passed." Her words echo the legislation, as the PVP Act 2019 exposes a significant disconnect: it provides stronger protections to plant and corporate breeders while leaving farmers vulnerable. The strong language, such as 'shall' for plant breeders' rights, contrasts with the weaker wording like 'may' for farmers' rights, clearly showing the Act's biased stance towards seed companies, corporations, and plant breeders.

Additionally, the Act fails to include provisions to protect farmers from losses when using hybrids and genetically modified seeds developed by seed companies, restricts their ability to sell farm-saved seeds within commercial arrangements, and lacks a realistic approach to registering farmers' varieties. However, article 23 of the PVP Act 2019 grants farmers the right to continue traditional farming, farmers' right to save, sell, exchange seeds on a limited scale, participate in decision-making, share benefits if corporate breeders use plant genetic resources developed by farmers, but it does not specify how these provisions will be implemented. The implementation of the PVP Act 2019 may further intensify the challenges faced by these farmers. That is why pursuing legal reform matters so deeply. Notably, embarking on the path to legal reform calls for a fresh look at another international framework.

Pertinently, in order to amplify small farmers' voices globally, the UN adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) in 2018. This milestone document recognised farmers' right to seed as a human right for the first time. Bangladesh voted in favour of UNDROP

but did not actively participate in the global debate or share its stories regarding farmers' rights to seed. Article 19, the right seed provision of UNDROP, covers a wide range of farmers' rights, which align with my research participants' perceptions and experiences, including rural farmers and other stakeholders in Bangladesh. Article 19 enshrines farmers' rights to save, exchange, and sell their farm-saved seeds, encourages countries to support community-based seed systems, and ensures small farmers' interests are prioritised over seed laws, IPR, and other contracts.

Incorporating article 19 on farmers' rights into the Plant Variety System can inspire hope among rural farmers in Bangladesh. To achieve this reform, it is crucial to revise the PVP Act 2019 and create a system that safeguards farmers' rights while promoting community-based seed saving and exchange. Throughout the revision and drafting process, it is vital to include voices from small farmers, farmers' rights advocates, environmentalists, alongside agricultural scientists, government officials, to ensure an engaging and inclusive approach.

Farmers from various regions of Bangladesh who participated in my research voiced concerns that have been ignored since the country's independence. As Will Rogers once said, "The farmer has to be an optimist, or he would not still be a farmer". But to keep the optimism alive, we have to interrogate the denial of their rights. It is time for us to advocate for law reform by adopting article 19 of the UNDROP in our Plant Variety System that supports them, ensuring that their heritage of high-quality seeds continues to flourish.

*The writer is Doctoral Candidate and Associate Lecturer in Law, The University of Newcastle, Australia.*

**As Will Rogers once said, "the farmer has to be an optimist, or he would not still be a farmer". But to keep the optimism alive, we have to interrogate the denial of their rights. It is time for us to advocate for law reform by adopting article 19 of the UNDROP in our Plant Variety System that supports them, ensuring that their heritage of high-quality seeds continues to flourish.**

The government of Bangladesh clearly appears rather reticent when it comes to solving the challenges faced by small farmers willing to control their seeds. Instead of prioritising the needs of small-scale farmers, there is a noticeable trend towards favouring large seed companies that push hybrid crops, revealing a clear tilt towards corporate interests. Scepticism about supporting small farmers is part of a larger global context, in which technological advancement and the rise of intellectual property rights are reshaping the agricultural landscape for developing countries. Academic works revealed that major corporations and seed companies form powerful stakeholders who deploy legal tools such as Intellectual Property Rights laws to gain control over seeds. Therefore, IPR laws such as Trade Related

of important international agreements, including the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) in 2001 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) in 2019. However, scholars found that farmers' rights under article 9 of the ITPGRFA are less comprehensive and offer weak protections. This gives developing countries like Bangladesh flexibility to sideline farmers' interests. Not surprisingly, Bangladesh, as a member of ITPGRFA, used this flexibility, compromising farmers' broader interests and developing its Plant Varieties Protection (PVP) Act 2019.

Surprisingly, the country's farmers' rights advocates were largely unaware of the Act's drafting process, which came as a shock to many. In a 2023 interview, as part

## LAW LETTER

## Labour Law (Amendment) Ordinance and Due Diligence

**The Labour Ordinance has brought many changes that align on paper with international standards. In practice, these changes must be strictly put in play for us to reap the benefits.**

The notion of human rights due diligence (HRDD) is a structured method, which state and nonstate actors have to apply to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for adverse human rights impacts arising from their actions. Needless to say, an important aspect of HRDD is labour rights.

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), which were unanimously adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011, has been the starting point of this recognising this obligation. In this age where private entities have immense influence, the UNGPs recognise the important responsibility that nonstate entities have in protecting human rights. The OECD Human Rights Due Diligence Guidance further operationalises these principles by providing extensive, industry-neutral guidance to help business entities implement HRDD in their business operations.

As a growing practice, several jurisdictions have made HRDD a legally binding obligation. For instance, the

Duty of Vigilance Law, 2017 of France and the Supply Chain Act, 2023 of Germany, impose mandatory HRDD obligations. Bangladesh, too, has an important role to play here as it is a major manufacturing hub, especially in the RMG sector. The Labour (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 (the "Ordinance") addresses many of the gaps that existed in our legal framework and aligns domestic law more closely with international HRDD standards. While the amendment is primarily a labour reform, it strengthens the legal environment in which HRDD can operate effectively.

The Ordinance has introduced significant reforms. ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98 identify freedom of association as an enabling right, essential to protect other labour rights. Section 179 of the Act is amended to make trade union formation more accessible by replacing the percentage-based threshold with a fixed minimum threshold of 20 workers, subject to proportionate increases for larger establishments. Maternity leave is extended from



112 to 120 days by amending section 46 of the Act. Moreover, instead of treating sexual harassment as an individual criminal offence, the Ordinance has addressed it through an organisational accountability framework with the requirement of establishing a complaint committee with female representation. It has also introduced a detailed definition through the insertion of sub-section 52A under

section 2 of the Act, covering thirteen forms of sexual harassment. The Ordinance has also introduced sections 345A to 345B in the Act prohibiting discrimination based on race, gender, religion, etc. These changes reflect the principles found in ILO Convention 190 and the UN Women GAIA Principles.

Moreover, the Amendment has extended protection to certain types of workers who were previously not

protected, eg, domestic workers. In line with the UNGPs principles 26 to 31 on accessible, timely, and effective remedies, the 2025 amendment has established a three-tier remedy infrastructure, namely workplace complaint committees, and grievance redressal.

The Ordinance has further amended section 195 of the Act to prohibit worker blacklisting and bar the employers from preparing and maintaining a list or database of workers ineligible for re-employment after termination for any other reason. It has also prohibited employers from undermining trade unions, such as influencing formation, manipulating leadership, or dismissing union members, aiming to correct power imbalances.

In a nutshell, the Labour Ordinance has brought many changes that align on paper with international standards. In practice, these changes must be strictly put in play for us to reap the benefits.

**Fairuz Islam**  
*Studies law at Bangladesh University of Professionals and works at Ergo Legal Counsel.*



The 12th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League got underway in the presence of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul on Friday in Sylhet with a short opening ceremony featuring Quran recitation, the singing of the national anthem, a minute's silence in memory of the late Sharif Osman Hadi -- a youth activist and July uprising leader -- along with the release of smoke flares and balloons. The BCB had announced a sell-out of tickets for the opening-day fixtures, and the 18,000-capacity Sylhet International Cricket Stadium was packed in every corner and treated to a high-scoring thriller in the opener that featured the first century of the tournament from Rajshahi skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto against Sylhet Titans. PHOTO: BCB

## Royals avoid further embarrassment

SPORTS REPORTER

Chattogram Royals narrowly avoided further embarrassment on Friday by meeting the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) requirement of fielding at least two foreign players in their opening match against Noakhali Express in Sylhet.

The Royals included Pakistani top-order batter Mirza Tahir Baig and Afghanistan wicketkeeper-batter Masood Gurbaz in their playing XI, complying with BPL 12 bylaws that mandate teams to field a minimum of two and a maximum of four overseas players in a match.

There had been doubts over Chattogram's ability to bring in any foreign players after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) took over ownership of the franchise just a day before the tournament. The takeover followed the withdrawal of Triangle Services Limited, which cited financial constraints in relinquishing the franchise rights.

Sources said efforts are underway to recruit more overseas players for upcoming matches.

By naming two foreign players, Chattogram avoided a repeat of last season's controversy when Durbar Rajshahi were forced to play without any overseas players against Rangpur Riders due to payment disputes. On that occasion, the BPL Technical Committee allowed Rajshahi to field an all-local XI under clause 1.2.8, which permits exceptions for "valid reasons".

## Shanto sizzles to 'put pressure on selectors'

ABDULLAH AL MEHIDI

Rajshahi Warriors captain Najmul Hossain Shanto celebrated with a pumped fist and the customary air kiss off the bat after marking a match-winning century in Sylhet yesterday. More than a milestone, it was a determined effort to seize an opportunity in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) he had called crucial for his national ambitions ahead of the T20 World Cup.

Shanto showed composure before accelerating with sharp shot selection to guide his team to an emphatic eight-wicket win over Sylhet Titans. The wicket at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium offered value for runs as Sylhet posted 190 for five after being asked to bat, but the chase seemed to slip when Rajshahi reached 43 for one in the Powerplay.

However, Shanto, scoring at a run-a-ball, shifted gears with a six off Mehidy Hasan Miraz. A dropped caught-and-bowled chance off the next ball allowed him to find his rhythm with a drive through mid-on, and the boundaries followed as he capitalised on the evening dew.

"When we finished the first innings, we knew the dew would come and the wicket would be better," Shanto said at the post-match presentation.



With a T20I strike-rate of 109.06, Shanto had previously lost both the captaincy and his place in the Tigers' T20I side. This innings, however, showcased a more assured hitting arc, blending composure with sustained acceleration. After reaching 30 off 25 balls, he brought up his fifty in 36 deliveries and completed his ton in 58, striking 10 fours and five sixes -- including a 101-metre maximum. Bangladesh batting coach

Mohammad Ashraful believes Shanto is overcoming his T20 difficulties.

"He had two tons already in this format [in T20s]. The last two years didn't go well, especially last year when he didn't get many games," Ashraful told The Daily Star.

"Strike-rate was being talked about and he struggled, but he is the kind of player who, when he scores, scores big. In this format, when a player has such ability, there's not much argument against him," Ashraful noted, adding that his approach could force the selectors into renewed discussion ahead of the T20 World Cup in February next year.

"Seeing him bat, it feels like he will remain in the conversation if he continues this way. He has started this BPL outstandingly and, if it continues, there will definitely be pressure on selectors."

A strike-rate of 168.3 from the opener boosted Shanto's confidence. He lifted the tempo precisely when scoreboard pressure threatened to engulf his side during the unbeaten 101 off 60 balls. Earlier, Shanto had told this newspaper that he was more focused on impact than volume of runs -- an impact he certainly delivered, along with momentum for Rajshahi in their campaign opener.

## Madness at the MCG

England fast bowler Josh Tongue etched his name into the history books on a crazy opening day of the fourth Ashes Test against hosts Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday, as bowlers made full use of a lush green surface and early overcast conditions, with a total of 13 innings ending in single digits. Australia were 4 for 0 in their second innings at the close, with Scott Boland on four, 46 runs ahead, and Travis Head yet to face a ball.

A remarkable 20 wickets fell in a frantic day, with Australia bowled out for 152 before striking back to dismiss England for 110, leaving the match on a knife-edge.

It was the fifth time that 20 or more wickets fell on Day 1 of a Test in Australia. The record is 25 wickets, set in a match between the same sides at the MCG in 1901-02.

A total of 94,199 fans attended the iconic MCG -- the biggest cricket crowd ever at the venue, surpassing the 93,013 who watched the 2015 World Cup final.

Tongue, who returned figures of 5 for 45 in the first innings, became the first England bowler since Dean Headley and Darren Gough in 1998 to take five wickets in an innings in a Test at the MCG.

England batter Joe Root's 41-run knock was the highest among the two sides.

Australia have already retained the Ashes after eight-wicket victories in Perth and Brisbane and an 82-run win in Adelaide.



## Ayush brace takes Police to third

SPORTS REPORTER

Young Nepalese forward scored his first goals in the Bangladesh Football League as Bangladesh Police registered a 3-0 win over Arambagh at the Shaheed Miraj Tapan Stadium in Manikganj on Friday.

Police, who stunned league leaders Bashundhara Kings in the previous round, opened the scoring in the 26th minute when 21-year-old Ayush finished a neat move initiated by Shafiq Kagimu.

Veteran Bangladeshi winger Amirul Islam doubled Police's lead three minutes before half-time after being set up by Ismail Hossen.

The Ayush-Kagimu partnership was at work again as Police wrapped up the victory seven minutes after restart, with Ayush getting his second goal of the match as well as of the campaign.

The comprehensive victory put Police in third position with 13 points from eight matches, one ahead of Rahmatganj who have a game in hand.

Arambagh, meanwhile, remained second from bottom on goal difference with five points, with Young Men's Fakirerpool Club languishing at the bottom with same number of points.

### A LOOK BACK AT 2025

## A year of turmoil in Bangladesh cricket

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The year 2025 will be remembered less for what Bangladesh cricket achieved on the field and more for the turbulence that engulfed it off it.

Across formats, the men's, women's, and age-level teams struggled to meet expectations, but their underwhelming performances were largely overshadowed by sustained administrative chaos within the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

**BPL 11 SCANDAL AND UNPAID DUES**  
The year began with multiple reports of alleged fixing in the 11th Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), with players, officials, and franchises named in the media after being red-flagged by the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU).

The BCB acted swiftly to form an inquiry committee, and its nine-month investigation yielded a 900-page report, which was not made public.

The board later appointed former ICC Anti-Corruption chief Alex Marshall to revamp its ACU. He was handed the inquiry committee's report, and based on his recommendations, those under suspicion were barred from the next BPL season.

Meanwhile, the board struggled to

contain the damage caused by unpaid dues involving franchises Durbar Rajshahi and Chattogram Kings -- an embarrassment that tarnished the league's reputation both locally and globally.

Eventually, the BCB awarded fresh contracts to six franchises, including four new ones, to relaunch BPL 12.

**CONSTITUTION AMENDMENTS BLOCKED, A PRESIDENT TOPPLED**  
Ahead of the 2025 BCB elections, the Faruque Ahmed-led board attempted to amend the board's constitution to curtail the influence of Dhaka clubs, which hold 76 councillor votes and elect 12 out of 25 BCB directors.

Once details of the proposed changes leaked, protests erupted, and clubs announced boycotts, forcing delays to domestic leagues. The amendment process was ultimately scrapped.

The biggest shock came in May, when eight directors passed a no-confidence motion against Faruque, prompting the National Sports Council (NSC) to revoke his directorship, which by default ended his presidency. Former Bangladesh captain Aminul Islam Bulbul was installed as president.

Though initially claiming he had no long-

term ambitions, Bulbul later contested the elections and secured a full four-year term following a highly controversial October 6 vote.

**ELECTION DRAMA**  
The election process itself was fraught with allegations of manipulated councillorship nominations, court cases, and repeated suspensions and reinstatements of voting rights for 15 clubs under Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) scrutiny.

Former Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud's open involvement further fueled criticism. A rival panel led by former Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal boycotted the vote, turnout was low, several directors were elected unopposed, and Bulbul was re-elected president -- with Faruque making a dramatic return as his deputy.

**BCB V DHAKA CLUBS**  
Relations between the BCB and Dhaka clubs hit an all-time low after the polls, as the majority of clubs boycotted or threatened to boycott domestic competitions, citing irregularities in the election.

The standoff put the livelihoods of hundreds of cricketers at risk and remains unresolved, with eight clubs skipping the ongoing Dhaka First Division Cricket League and more expected to boycott the

Second Division and other tournaments.

**JAHANARA'S BOMBHELL ALLEGATIONS**

In November, former women's captain Jahanara Alam dropped a bombshell on the BCB when she publicly accused former women's team selector and team manager Manjurul Islam of sexual harassment.

Initially denied by the board, the allegations eventually led to the formation of an investigation committee. Despite multiple deadline extensions, the probe remains inconclusive, even as more women cricketers and athletes have come forward with similar claims regarding others.

**HRIDOY'S SUSPENSION**

In April, Mohammedan Sporting Club player Towhid Hridoy was handed a suspension for misconduct toward umpire Sharafudoula Ibne Shahid Saikat during the Dhaka Premier League.

The episode divided players and officials, with cricketers rallying behind Hridoy and the umpire threatening resignation. The matter escalated after Hridoy committed another offence, resulting in a lengthy suspension that ruled him out of the league-deciding match -- eventually won by Abahani Limited.

**SHANTO STRIPPED, RESIGNED AND RENAMED AS CAPTAIN**

Najmul Hossain Shanto was stripped of the ODI captaincy just hours before departure for a Sri Lanka tour in June, exposing a serious communication breakdown within the cricket operations department.

The fallout led Shanto to resign from the Test captaincy after the series, though he later returned to the role for the 2025-27 World Test Championship cycle following discussions with the board.

**LITTON, LIPU BUMP HEADS OVER SHAMIM**

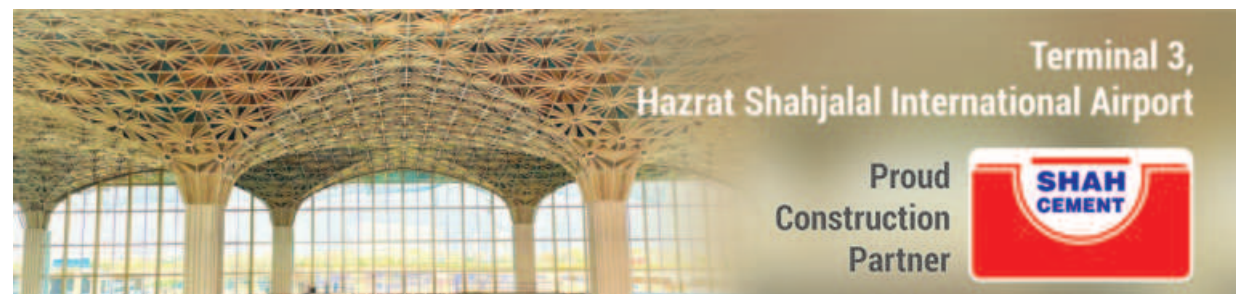
Tensions surfaced between the national selectors and T20I captain Litton Das over squad selection.

All-rounder Shamim Hossain was dropped from the squad for the first two of three Ireland T20Is in November-December. Skipper Litton told the media that he had wanted Shamim in the squad and had conveyed it to the selectors, forcing chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu to publicly clarify his stance.

Shamim was added to the squad for the third T20I and was picked in the XI. Overall, relentless off-field controversies eroded stability in Bangladesh cricket in 2025 -- a year defined more by turmoil than triumph.



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## Tarique may register as voter today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday said there is no legal bar to BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman's registration as a voter, clearing the way for his enlistment as early as today.

The EC said all preparations for his registration are complete, though it has not yet decided whether Tarique Rahman will appear at the commission's headquarters or whether an EC team will visit his residence to complete the process.

The commission said the matter involves no legal complications and will be handled in accordance with existing electoral laws and procedures.

Speaking to reporters, Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmnel Masud said, "There is no legal obstacle for Tarique Rahman to become a voter. Under Section 15 of the Voter List Act, 2009, the commission can register anyone as a voter at any time under special circumstances. Therefore, if it wishes, the EC can register anyone as a voter at any time."

Another commissioner, Anwarul  
SEE PAGE 3 COL 7



A group of men gather around a makeshift campfire for warmth amid the biting cold weather. The photo was taken on Indira Road in the capital last night.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Severe cold disrupts lives in the north

Farmers, daily wage earners worst affected

STAR REPORT

Severe cold continued to disrupt the livelihoods of people across the country yesterday, particularly in the northern districts, with low-income groups and agrarian communities bearing the brunt.

In Dhaka, the lowest temperature was recorded at 13.5 degrees Celsius, while Jashore recorded 9 degrees Celsius, the lowest temperature of the season so far.

Daily life has become particularly harsh in the Rangpur region as the cold spell continues to grip northern Bangladesh. People are staying indoors unless absolutely necessary, with thick fog blanketing the surroundings day and night amid biting cold.

According to the Rangpur Meteorological Office, as of 9:00am yesterday, the lowest temperatures recorded across the region were 10 degrees Celsius in Nilphamari, 11.5 degrees Celsius in Rangpur, 12 degrees Celsius in Lalmonirhat, 11.4 degrees Celsius in Kurigram, 12.1 degrees Celsius in Gaibandha, 11.4 degrees Celsius in Saidpur, 11 degrees Celsius in Panchagarh and 12 degrees Celsius in Dinajpur.

"This situation may persist for several more days," said Mostafizur Rahman, a meteorologist at the Rangpur

SEE PAGE 3 COL 2

## Ancient mosaic board game found at Mayan city

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Archaeologists have uncovered the remains of a unique mosaic-style board game in the Mayan city of Naachtun, Guatemala, offering fresh insights into gaming practices in the ancient world.

Patolli is one of the oldest ludo-like strategy board games played in the Americas by the Aztecs



and the earlier Mesoamerican cultures, typically involving an element of gambling.

It comprises a cross-shaped track of 52 spaces, drawn on cloth or even the ground, while patol beans marked with a dot on one side are thrown to function like dice. But exactly how the game was played in ancient Mayan societies remained unclear.

Recent excavations at Naachtun in northern Peten, once a Maya regional capital, offer clues about how people played the game, and its parallels to other sports in the region.

Researchers unearthed a board carved on the ground, made of small red mosaic tiles partly collected from broken ceramic vessels, parts of which they dated to the fourth century AD.

## 'Any party against graft may join our alliance'

Says Jamaat chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Any political party may forge an electoral alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami if it agrees to three conditions, Jamaat Ameer Shaliquur Rahman said yesterday.

He said such parties have to refrain from corruption and from patronising corrupt individuals, ensure equal justice at all levels of society without interfering with the judicial process. They also have to commit to implementing all reform recommendations.

His comments came amid speculation that the National Citizen Party is increasingly tilting toward a seat-sharing arrangement with Jamaat-e-Islami. Jamaat is already part of an eight-party Islamist bloc that includes Islami Andolan Bangladesh.

While addressing a conference of Islami Chhatra Shibir in the capital, Jamaat's student wing, he said Jamaat aims to build an education system that leaves no one unemployed.

Urging Shibir to act as

SEE PAGE 3 COL 7

## US launches strikes against IS in Nigeria

Trump claims the group targeting Christians in the northwest region



REUTERS, Palm Beach

The United States carried out strikes against Islamic State (IS) militants in northwest Nigeria at the request of Nigeria's government, President Donald Trump and the US military said on Thursday, claiming the group had been targeting Christians in the region.

"Tonight, at my direction as Commander in Chief, the United States launched a powerful and deadly strike against ISIS Terrorist Scum in Northwest Nigeria, who have been targeting and viciously killing, primarily, innocent Christians, at levels not seen for many years, and even Centuries!" Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

The US military's Africa Command said the strike was carried out in Sokoto state in coordination with Nigerian authorities and killed multiple ISIS militants.

Nigerian Foreign Minister Yusuf Maitama Tuggar told the British Broadcasting Corp the strike was a "joint operation" targeting "terrorists", and it "has nothing to do with a particular religion".

Without naming ISIS specifically, Tuggar said the operation had been planned "for quite some time" and had used intelligence information provided by the Nigerian side. He did not rule out further strikes, adding that this depended on

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## CRITICAL FUEL SHORTAGE Gaza hospital halts most services

AFP, Khan Yunis

A major Gaza hospital has suspended several services because of a critical fuel shortage in the devastated Palestinian territory, which continues to face a severe humanitarian crisis, it said.

Devastated by more than two years of war, the Al-Awda Hospital in the central Gaza district of Nuseirat cares for around 60 in-patients and receives nearly 1,000 people seeking medical treatment each day.

"Most services have been temporarily stopped due to a shortage of the fuel needed for the generators," said Ahmed Mehanna, a senior official involved in managing the hospital.

"Only essential departments remain operational: the emergency unit, maternity ward and paediatrics."

To keep these services running, the hospital has been forced to rent a small generator, he added. Under normal conditions, Al-Awda Hospital consumes between 1,000 and 1,200 litres of diesel per day. At present, however, it has only 800 litres available.

"We stress that this shutdown is temporary and linked to the availability of fuel," Mehanna said, warning that a prolonged fuel shortage "would pose a direct threat to the

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- Only essential units running at Al-Awda Hospital
- Truce allowed 600 aid trucks daily; only 100-300 now enter
- MSF now manages one-third of 2,300 hospital beds

## BPL 12 begins in style

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The 12th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League T20 (BPL) got underway in spectacular fashion yesterday as Rajshahi Warriors edged Sylhet Titans in a high-scoring thriller at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, pushing aside the off-field chaos that marked the tournament's build-up.

Despite widespread concerns over organisational issues ahead of the opening day, the tournament began smoothly, offering several positives for organisers and fans alike.

The competition was officially launched in the presence of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul, with a brief opening ceremony featuring a minute's silence in memory of late youth activist and July uprising leader Sharif Osman Hadi. Smoke flares and balloon releases added colour to the occasion.

The 18,000-capacity stadium was packed to the rafters, and the crowd was treated to a run-fest, highlighted by the tournament's first century from Rajshahi skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto. Shanto smashed an unbeaten 101 off 60 balls, striking 10 fours and five sixes, and shared an unbroken 130-run partnership off just 71 balls with Mushfiqur Rahim, who remained not out on 51 off 31 deliveries. Rajshahi chased down the target to finish on 192 for two in 19.4 overs.

Earlier, Sylhet Titans posted a competitive 190 for five after being sent in to bat, riding on Parvez Hossain Emon's unbeaten 65 off 33 balls. Rony Talukdar and Afif Hossain

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Rajshahi Warriors captain Najmul Hossain Shanto celebrates after scoring the second T20 century of his career in the opening match of the 12th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League in Sylhet yesterday. Shanto's unbeaten 60-ball 101 helped Rajshahi chase down Sylhet Titans' 191-run target with eight wickets and two balls to spare. In the second match of the day, Chattogram Royals beat Noakhali Express by 65 runs at the same venue.

PHOTO: BCB

## IMDB GRAFT TRIAL Malaysia ex-PM Najib jailed for 15 more years



REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's influential former premier Najib Razak was jailed yesterday for a further 15 years and fined \$2.8 billion for power abuse and money laundering in the biggest trial of the multibillion-dollar IMDB scandal, a ruling that could have big political ramifications.

Najib urged Malaysians to be calm, and said he would continue his "struggle" and demand his rights through legitimate channels.

Malaysia and US investigators say at least \$4.5 billion was stolen from Malaysia Development Berhad, a

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