

NCP ties up with Jamaat 'strictly for election'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party has forged a seat-sharing arrangement with Jamaat-e-Islami to contest the February 12 national election, ending days of intense speculations.

NCP Convener Nahid Islam at a press conference yesterday said the party's pact with Jamaat and other parties is "strictly electoral".

"In the current political situation, it is not possible for the NCP to contest the election alone. That is why we have decided to form an alliance with like-minded parties."

The party's reform, justice, and anti-hegemony agenda will, however, will remain unchanged, he added.

"This is not an ideological alliance; it is an electoral understanding. Our goals and principles will continue. For now, the focus is on electoral cooperation."

"This understanding will help overcome electoral hurdles while keeping our reform agenda alive."

The NCP chief observed that addressing the country's crises and fulfilling post-uprising goals requires wider cooperation.

Under the agreement, he added, candidates finalised through the alliance would submit nomination papers, with the NCP and its affiliates campaigning for them. In constituencies where the party has no



Amid the biting cold, children huddle around small fires for warmth, unaware of the dangers of fire-related injuries. Each winter, many across the country suffer burns while trying to keep warm in this way. The photo was taken around 3:00pm yesterday in the capital's Ramchandrapur, when it was still foggy. Story on page 16.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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Our goals and principles will continue. For now, the focus is on electoral cooperation.

Nahid Islam, NCP convener



candidate, it will support alliance nominees.

On possible splits or resignations, Nahid said participation in the polls or remaining in the party is a personal decision. "Candidates will be selected from among those aligned with our objectives and who have higher chances of winning."

He also said the Gontantrik Songskar Jote no longer exists following the NCP's seat-sharing deal with Jamaat.

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Reform push or an ideological trade-off?

SHAMIMA RITA

The National Citizen Party's alignment with Jamaat-e-Islami took shape during the talks at the National Consensus Commission, with leaders insisting that state reforms remain central to its election agenda.

NCP leaders said their top priority is implementing the July charter and securing a victory for the "yes" vote in the referendum.

According to the party, Jamaat and its allies support its reform agenda, while the BNP has "adopted an anti-reform stance".

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NOMINATION SUBMISSION DEADLINE TODAY

Parties scramble to finalise line-ups

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and AHMED DEEPTO

Political parties are locked in fevered, last-minute negotiations to settle their line-ups for the February 12 polls, as today marks the final deadline for submitting nomination papers to the Election Commission.

Election officials said preliminary estimates show that at least 2,780 nomination papers had been collected as of 2:30pm yesterday.

EC Public Relations Officer Ruhul Amin Mollik cautioned that not all collected forms would translate into valid candidacies, while

many more were expected to be collected and submitted on the final day.

EC sources later said a total of 3,144 individuals had collected nomination papers by 5:00pm yesterday.

In a demi-official letter issued yesterday, Election Commission Secretary Akthar Ahmed urged the home ministry to take necessary steps to ensure a level playing field ahead of the 13th national parliamentary election and the referendum on the July charter, both scheduled for the same day.

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Justice Zubayer sworn in as 26th chief justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury was sworn in as the 26th chief justice of Bangladesh yesterday morning.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin administered the oath to the new chief justice at Darbar Hall in Bangabhaban at 10:30am, Supreme Court Registrar General Mohammed Habibur Rahman told The Daily Star.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, other advisers of the interim government, most of the judges of the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the SC, and chiefs of the armed forces, among others, were present at the oath-taking ceremony.

The felicitation of Chief Justice Zubayer will be held on January 4 at the SC, he said.

On December 23, the president appointed him as the new chief justice.

On Saturday, Chief Justice Dr Syed Refaat Ahmed retired from his post.

Born on May 18, 1961, Justice Zubayer is the son of the late AFM Abdur Rahman Chowdhury, who also served as a judge of the Supreme Court.



President Mohammed Shahabuddin administers the oath to new Chief Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury at Darbar Hall in Bangabhaban yesterday morning.

PHOTO: PID

Reform push or an ideological trade-off?

FROM PAGE 1

The NCP believes consolidating pro-reform votes into a single ballot would facilitate a "yes" victory and speed up implementation of core reforms.

At a press briefing yesterday, NCP Convenor Nahid Islam stated that his party's joining the Jamaat-led eight-party alliance is strictly an electoral arrangement and not based on any ideological alignment.

He explained the NCP was preparing to contest the polls independently and had planned to field candidates in all 300 constituencies, but after Sharif Osman Hadi was killed, Bangladesh's political landscape has changed significantly.

"Through this incident, we realised that the forces of hegemonic aggression are still active in the country. They are still conspiring to derail the election."

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, NCP Senior Joint Convenor Ariful Islam Adeeb said, "We're politically aligned on implementing the reform proposals within the democratic alliance. This will allow us to strengthen the role of eight to ten parties in implementing the July uprising's political agreement."

"At the same time, we can encourage everyone to play a more effective role in seeking justice for the genocide [during the uprising], implementing fundamental reforms, resisting domination, and protecting Bangladesh's independence and sovereignty. This is why we are moving forward with the alliance."

Yesterday, around 130 NCP leaders submitted a letter to party Convenor Nahid Islam, expressing solidarity and support for the alliance decision.

The signatories included senior joint conveners Ariful Islam Adeeb, Sarwar Tushar, Dr Atik Mujahid, Javed Rasin, Sultan Muhammad Zakaria, and Ehtesham Haque; Joint Member Secretary Ariful Rahman Tuhin; Senior Joint Chief Organiser Saifullah Haider; along with other members including Attaullah, Mahmuda Mitu, Ali Naser Khan, Mahin Sarkar, and others.

In the letter, they said, "We extend our full trust and support to any political understanding or alliance decision taken by the convenor and member secretary, considering party and national interests and the goal of democratic transformation."

They also expressed hope that the convenor would keep the party united and strong through visionary leadership and political wisdom, reinforcing public trust.

Sarwar Tushar told this correspondent that talks about an alliance with BNP fell through because "consensus and alliances are built as a team, not based on individual preferences".

Perhaps other parties were interested in certain individuals rather than the party as a whole, whereas the alliance with Jamaat means two parties coming together."

Post-election security was also cited as a factor, with NCP leaders claiming increasing harassment of their grassroots activists by BNP members. "Once and if they come to power, it will be difficult to protect the people of my constituency. Allying with Jamaat will allow the party to protect its grassroots-level activists," he said.

Party leaders said BNP's gradual shift towards the centre-left, coupled with its move to woo vote banks left empty by the Awami League's removal from the electoral arena, has left the centre-right open.

NCP insiders said that while the party always planned to move ahead independently, their abysmal performance in the student union elections across campuses was a moment of reckoning. "It made us seriously consider the need for an alliance," Tushar said.

Regarding their previous alliance, Senior Joint Convenor Ariful Islam Adeeb said, "Our previous Gonotantrik Songskar Jote was a political alliance, but the alliance we are now forming with Jamaat and eight other parties is an electoral one."

Though the NCP is proceeding with the 30 seats committed by the Jamaat-led alliance, insiders said negotiations were ongoing to raise the number to 40, while the party is seeking 51.

The party's decision to enter this alliance alienated a small but significant faction, which includes former information adviser Mahfuj Alam.

In a Facebook post yesterday, he wrote that he had tried to establish NCP as a "Big July Umbrella" but failed, and questioned whether the platforms had truly embraced principles such as a new political-economic settlement, cultural resistance to fascism, and building a society of empathy.

The alliance also did not sit well with five other leaders – Senior Joint Member Secretary Tasnim Jara, Joint Member Secretary Arshadul Haque, joint conveners Monira Sharmin and Tajnuva Jabeen, and Joint Chief Coordinator Navid Nowroz Shah -- to announce their resignations and/or withdrawal from the polls.

While Jara has announced her resignation and decision to run independently in the polls on Saturday, Jabeen yesterday resigned from the party and withdrew from the race.

Monira remains in the party but announced her withdrawal from the election yesterday.

Monira and Jara had initially been offered seats under the 30-seat sharing arrangement, but both turned down the offer.

Arshadul, who was the NCP's Chattogram-16 nominee, resigned from the party on Thursday but has yet to announce whether he will contest the polls. The party's Cumilla-6 nominee Navid last night announced withdrawing from the race but remaining in the NCP.

The small but influential faction argues that the alliance with Jamaat is a strategic miscalculation and will cost the party politically in the long run.

Announcing her resignation yesterday on her verified Facebook page, Jabeen wrote, "Many assume my objection to the alliance with Jamaat is rooted in historical reasons or women's issues. But what was more alarming was the process through which this was executed.

"According to the National Citizen Party's long-held position, its core principles and vision for the state are fundamentally different from those of Jamaat. The NCP is a party built around the issues of justice, reform, and a Constituent Assembly election, leading toward a Second Republic. Therefore, a shared position on these three issues must be a prerequisite for political alliance."

"The situation was engineered in a way to make it seem like there was

no alternative to forming the alliance. Other possibilities were deliberately sidelined. Many have been brought into this platform through calculated tactics and effectively held hostage."

She also criticised the nomination process, saying, "Just days ago, 125 aspirants were asked to collect nomination forms. The subsequent decision to cap the arrangement at 30 seats and ask the remaining aspirants to stand down was not taken through any open discussion or general meeting. Now, leaders are being told to campaign for Jamaat candidates in the remaining constituencies -- an issue that was never previously discussed."

Jabeen also took a jab at the party's top leadership over alleged internal power struggles. "Senior leaders are preoccupied with removing one another through internal feuds. They are so consumed by personal rivalries, they'll never be able to build a centrist, Bangladesh-focused political force capable of serving the country.... The July spirit is not cultivated here; it is only used for political gain."

Join Convenor Monira Sharmin wrote on her Facebook page yesterday, "I believe in the independent political strength of the NCP. I have not broken my commitment to the party. But at this moment, my commitment to the mass uprising and to the people of this country outweighs that to my party."

"To those who supported me financially, encouraged me on this difficult path, and sent messages of hope, I sincerely apologise for disappointing you [by withdrawing from the race] at this moment. Please know that I did not enter politics to pursue power. I won't betray my party or the people by going to power through seat-sharing while preaching political change."

Thanking the party convenor, member secretary, and the political council for nominating him for Cumilla-6, Navid on his Facebook page wrote, "Yesterday, an electoral alliance comprising Jamaat, the NCP, and eight other parties was announced.... In light of the changed circumstances, I am withdrawing myself from the race... I extend my advance best wishes to whoever the alliance nominates for Cumilla-6."

He added he and his colleagues would continue campaigning for a "yes" vote in the July Charter referendum on behalf of the NCP.

Senior Joint Convenor Samanta Sharmin clarified her position on her Facebook page. "Some members of the National Citizen Party deviated from the party's core aspirations on December 28, 2025 at 5:30pm in exchange for a handful of seats.... Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami is not a reliable ally. I believe that entering into any form of cooperation or understanding with Jamaat -- given its political position and ideology -- would require the NCP to pay a heavy price."

"According to the National Citizen Party's long-held position, its core principles and vision for the state are fundamentally different from those of Jamaat. The NCP is a party built around the issues of justice, reform, and a Constituent Assembly election, leading toward a Second Republic. Therefore, a shared position on these three issues must be a prerequisite for political alliance."

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NCP ties up with Jamaat

FROM PAGE 1

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), led by Col (retired) Oli Ahmed, also joined the Jamaat-led electoral pact, expanding it from eight to 10 parties.

Yesterday afternoon, Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman announced the development at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

He said the alliance has nearly completed its nomination list for all 300 constituencies through discussions, with the remaining work to be completed fairly after the submission of nomination papers.

Referring to the NCP's absence in the briefing, he said the party's leaders were unable to attend due to time constraints but had formally conveyed their decision to join the alliance and would brief the media separately.

"We want a free, fair, and acceptable election on the announced date.

Ensuring a level playing field and fulfilling constitutional responsibilities is the duty of the government and the Election Commission. Any deviation will not be accepted by the nation."

He said many in the younger generation were unable to vote in the last three elections. "Our voting rights were taken away. Standing shoulder to shoulder with this new generation, we will fight to restore the right to vote through a free and fair election. This is not merely an alliance; it is a unity stronger than an alliance -- essentially a 10-party electoral understanding for nation-

building and the election."

Asked about seat allocations, the Jamaat Ameer said, "No single party is allocating seats to others. Based on fairness and merit, we are entrusting seats to one another."

However, senior leaders of the parties involved in the joint movement said an understanding had been reached by Sunday afternoon on around 260 to 265 seats.

For the remaining 30 to 35 constituencies, where multiple parties believe their candidates are more qualified or popular, discussions will continue after Jamaat's grand rally scheduled for January 3, with informal talks ongoing in the meantime.

On the condition of anonymity, a senior leader said the LDP had sought 10 seats, though it is unlikely to receive more than four. While discussions have mentioned conceding 30 seats to the NCP, the number is expected to be capped at 25. Jamaat is unlikely to contest more than 180 to 185 seats, Islami Andolan Bangladesh no more than 35, and Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis no more than 13 to 14 seats.

Another leader said that at a meeting of top alliance leaders yesterday, aspirants in constituencies where consensus has yet to be reached, were asked to submit nomination papers. Once an agreement is finalised, others will withdraw their candidacies.

An Islami Andolan Bangladesh leader said the party would submit nomination papers in all 300 constituencies but

I'm not becoming a part of this NCP: Mahfuj Alam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahfuj Alam, former adviser to the interim government, has announced that he will not join the National Citizen Party. He also said he had rejected an offer to contest the national election from a Dhaka seat under the Jamaat-NCP alliance.

In a Facebook post yesterday, Mahfuj said maintaining his ideological position was more important to him than securing a nomination.

"It is not true that I was not offered a proposal from the Jamaat-NCP alliance. However, maintaining my long-standing position is far more important to me than becoming a candidate for a Dhaka seat under this alliance," he wrote.

He clarified that he had provided strategic guidance to the NCP and the Ngorik Committee over the past 18 months, as both were led by his "July co-fighters".

"In the existing reality, my respect, affection and friendship for my July co-fighters will not be erased. But I am not becoming a part of this NCP," he said.

Explaining his decision, Mahfuj said his attempt to establish the NCP as a "Big July Umbrella" had failed.

Describing the current political climate as a "cold war", he said neutrality was the most prudent path.



BNP reviews several picks

FROM PAGE 1

and has advised that several nominations be reconsidered.

The development came from his first day in the party chairperson's office in Gulshan yesterday. A room had been prepared for him on the second floor of the independent building on Road 88 of Gulshan, which has been serving as the party chairperson's office since 2008.

He arrived at the office at 1:40pm and left at around 10:28pm for Evercare Hospital in Bashundhara to see his ailing mother, former prime minister Khaleda Zia.

The review comes as the BNP intensifies its internal preparations ahead of the national election, with the party leadership placing a growing emphasis on grassroots mobilisation, local visibility and organisational strength at the constituency level. The Daily Star has learnt from people with direct knowledge of the discussions.

Tarique assessed the activities of candidates already announced for specific seats and expressed dissatisfaction with the level of engagement in some areas, they said.

He found weak organisational presence, limited voter outreach and a lack of sustained political activity on the ground in certain constituencies.

In response, Tarique asked members of the party's selection steering committee to reassess those nominations and examine whether alternative candidates would be better placed to strengthen the party's position locally.

He advised reviewing organisational feedback from local units and recent political activity before taking any final decision on the nominations.

Party leaders said the move should not be seen as punitive but as part of a broader effort to ensure electoral readiness. The leadership wants candidates who are visible, active and able to mobilise voters at the local level.

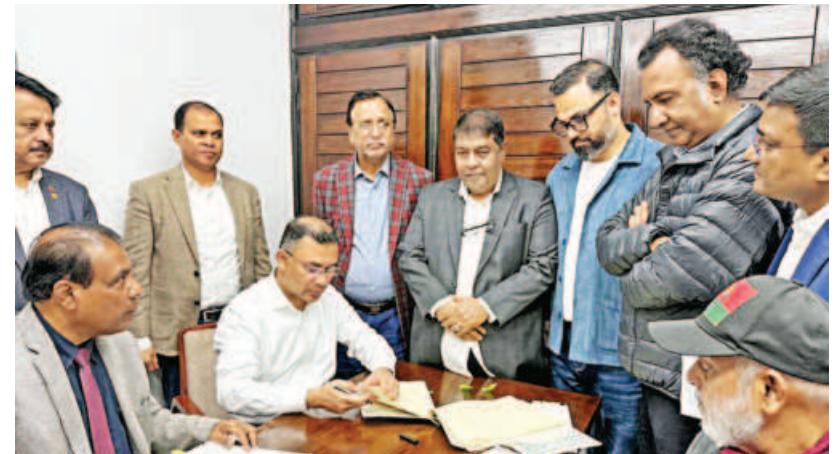
Discussions took place on the possible changes of candidates in 17 constituencies, including Munshiganj-3, Sunamganj-2, Brahmanbaria-4 and Chattogram-6, according to party insiders.

In the seats, new nominees may be announced if the review concludes that current candidates are underperforming or left vacant for alliance members.

No final decision has yet been taken and consultations are still ongoing. Any changes would be made after further assessment and approval by the party's highest decision-making bodies.

The committee for Bogura 6 will be led by Bogura district BNP president Rezaul Karim Badsha.

Separately, nomination forms for BNP chief Khaleda for the Bogura-7 and Feni-



BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman signs nomination papers for Dhaka-17 and Bogura-6 yesterday.

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL

1 constituencies are set to be submitted today, party sources said.

Her nomination paper for the Dinajpur 3 seat was submitted yesterday.

Upon arrival at the party chairperson's office, senior party leaders, including standing committee members Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain, Mirza Abbas, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Abdul Moyeen Khan, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury and senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, welcomed him with a bouquet.

Electoral related issues and organisational matters were discussed, Mosharrif told journalists afterwards.

"To fulfil the hopes and expectations that have arisen, we will have to go to the people of Bangladesh in the coming days and listen to them. Tarique Rahman listens more than he speaks -- that is one of his qualities," Khosru said.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission yesterday included Tarique and his daughter Zaima Rahman in the country's voter list ahead of the national election. EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed told reporters.

On Saturday, Tarique and Zaima completed the necessary process for National Identity Card registration and voter enlistment at the Election Commission's National Identity Wing in Agargaon, where their biometric data and photographs were taken.

They were registered as voters in the Dhaka-17 constituency under DNCC Ward No. 19 in the Gulshan area, using the address of House No. 196, Gulshan-2.



Strengthen cyber security ahead of polls

Yunus directs National Cyber Security Agency

BSB, Dhaka
Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday directed the National Cyber Security Agency to ensure all forms of cyber security ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections.

"Centred on the upcoming elections, we have to enhance our information technology capabilities and strictly combat all types of cybercrime," he said.

Yunus, also chairman of SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

JNU STUDENT POLLS Allegations of code violations surface ahead of election

RAKIB MADBER

Allegations of widespread violations of the election code of conduct have emerged ahead of the first-ever Jagannath University Central Students' Union (JnUCSU) elections, triggering counter accusations among rival panels despite a festive mood on campus.

The election is scheduled to take place tomorrow.

Students and several candidates have alleged that the panels backed by Chhatra Shibir, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), and Chhatra Shakti were all breaching election rules during their campaigns.

Students alleged that nightly gatherings featuring feasts were being held near the Pogose School area and the second gate beside the Shaheed Sajid Building, where votes were being solicited and money was being offered for campaign participation, particularly by the JCD-backed panel.

Allegations of additional violations have also surfaced, including food distribution in female residential halls by the Shibir-backed panel, while the Chhatra Shakti-backed panel brought national football team captain Jamal Bhuyan to campus for campaigning, violating polls conduct.

Arafat Nafis, a student of Public Administration department, said all three panels were violating polls code. Shibir distributed food in female halls under the guise of projection meetings, while JCD provided scholarships in halls and funded district welfare programmes, he alleged.

Mehrun Khanom, a student of Mass Communication and Journalism, cited Section 11(e) of the JnUCSU election code, which prohibits serving food, drinks or gifts to voters.

She said both JCD and Shibir violated the rule.

Referring to Jamal Bhuyan's presence, she said the code also bans the involvement of outsiders in campaigns.

Independent general secretary candidate Md SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Momentarily lifted off the ground by the weight of this heavily-loaded handcart, a puller hangs from its front while trying to haul sacks of essential commodities near the TSC area of the Dhaka University campus. Another man helps him from behind, struggling to balance the cart and keep it moving. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Children's safety under growing threat

1,170 child-related news reports involve rape, murder in 2025, says study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Children's safety in Bangladesh is increasingly under threat due to rising incidents of rape, murder and abuse, according to a study based on reports published in national and local newspapers.

The findings were revealed in a report titled "State of Child Rights 2025", which shows that 1,170 reports – 62.66 percent of 1,867 negative news reports – were related to children involved in rape and murder.

The report was unveiled at a programme organised by Sachetan Sangstha, with support from Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and Street Children Activists Network (SCAN) Bangladesh, at the CIRDAP auditorium in Dhaka yesterday.

Presenting the study, SCAN Bangladesh General Secretary Moniruzzaman Mukul said newspapers published 1,485 major reports related to children between January and November this year.

Of these, the largest share – 31.19 percent – concerned accidents and tragedies, including road crashes, drowning, falls from buildings and deaths during play, he said.

According to the analysis, reports on child abuse and violence accounted for 15.63 percent, while child trafficking and sexual exploitation made up 8.75 percent.

Reports related to child health and protection stood at 9.70 percent, while those focusing on risks in the education sector accounted for 6.94 percent, it added.

The report further noted that among the 1,867 negative news items, 15.16

percent involved child deaths caused by accidents.

Regionally, the Dhaka division recorded the highest number of crimes and accidents involving children. In the division, a total of 2,376 children were identified as victims, the report said.

Moniruzzaman said all political parties contesting the upcoming national parliamentary election should include clear commitments to child rights in their election manifestos.

He also stressed the need for swift trials and stringent punishment in

AT A GLANCE

Accidents, tragedies made up largest share of child-related news

Dhaka division recorded highest number of child victims

Rights groups urge political parties to commit to child protection

Calls grow for swift trials, stricter punishment in child abuse cases

cases of child rape and murder, as well as improved healthcare, psychosocial support and safe environments for children, particularly in marginalised areas.

Speaking as chief guest, Shishu Academy Director General Arju Ara Begum said the report was based on newspaper coverage and therefore did not reflect the complete national situation, but described the findings as "frightening".

She said the government was undertaking various initiatives for SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Plans afoot to destabilise the country

Says Fakhru
BSS, Thakurgaon

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday said a vested quarter is hatching conspiracies to destabilise the country.

Fakhru made the remarks while speaking as the chief guest at a view-exchange meeting with Islamic scholars (ulemas) at the Human Welfare Council Training Centre ground in Thakurgaon.

Noting that the country is passing through a critical period marked by rumours, confusion and various movements, Fakhru said, "We must remain cautious at this time so that we do not once again slide into darkness."

He stressed that the upcoming 13th Jatiya Sangsad election is extremely important and warned that attempts are being made to derail it. "We must ensure that no one can thwart this election," he said.

Calling for unity, he said internal divisions must be avoided, as conspirators would take advantage of any rift, causing harm to both the country and its people.

Describing Islam as SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Teachers condemn mob violence, media attacks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Teachers' Network has strongly condemned a wave of violence, arson, and mob attacks across the country, accusing student representatives of acting beyond their authority and threatening freedom of expression.

In a statement issued yesterday, the network said the situation deteriorated following the shooting of young politician Sharif Osman Bin Hadi on December 12 and his death on December 18.

The killing was followed by attacks on leading newspapers, The Daily Star and Prothom Alo, as well as cultural institutions Chhayanaut and Uddi Shilpi Gosthi.

"Using the anger and frustration after Hadi's killing, opportunistic groups have carried out one criminal act after another," said the statement.

The interim government has failed to arrest the killers, while journalists, cultural activists, and ordinary citizens have come under attack, it added.

The teachers also condemned several killings across the country, including the mob killing of Dipu Chandra Das in Bhulka over alleged blasphemy and the burning to death of two children of BNP leader Belal Hossain in Lakshmpur.

They further criticised the conduct of Rucusu leaders, particularly its General Secretary Salahuddin Ammar, accusing him of creating mob pressure, harassing teachers, and forcing deans to resign.

"The elected student representatives acted as if they themselves were the administration. SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

ABU SAYED KILLING Primary evidence found against 30 accused: IO

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Testifying before the International Crimes Tribunal-2 for the second consecutive day yesterday, the investigation officer (IO) in the case filed over the killing of Begum Rokeya University student Abu Sayed during last year's July uprising said the involvement of 30 accused in the crimes against humanity case has been proven at the primary level.

IO Ruhul Amin also told the tribunal that he found evidence indicating the doctor, who prepared Sayed's post-mortem report, had been pressured to change the report six times.



He further said that seized evidence, statements from the victim's family members and injured witnesses, along with other collected materials, indicate that crimes against humanity were committed in a systematic and widespread manner against unarmed students and civilians during the anti-discrimination student movement in July-August 2024.

A total of 30 individuals, including senior university and police officials, have been accused of murder and crimes against humanity. The accused include former Begum Rokeya University vice chancellor Md Hasibur Rashid and former Rangpur Metropolitan Police commissioner Md Moniruzzaman. They face charges of murder, attempted murder, abetment and complicity in crimes against humanity.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

The Daily Star will stand tall again

Says Adviser Sakhawat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Labour and Employment Adviser Brigadier General (rtd) MSAKAWAT HUSSAIN yesterday expressed solidarity with The Daily Star, saying the newspaper would rise again with courage despite a devastating setback.

On the night of December 18, mobs carried out coordinated attacks on the national daily's head office in Dhaka, vandalising offices, looting valuables, setting parts of the building on fire and trapping journalists and staff inside for hours.

"I am very sad," the adviser said while visiting The Daily Star office yesterday.

He said a free and resilient media is essential for democracy in Bangladesh.

The adviser said the role of the media is neither to stand for nor against any individual or government, adding that no media outlet anywhere in the world remains permanently on one side.

He noted that the media landscape in Bangladesh did not develop overnight and that, in a country like Bangladesh, The Daily Star had grown steadily over time.

"In that context, this is undoubtedly a major setback, but I am confident that a newspaper like The Daily Star will stand tall again," he said.

"Even after such devastation, this newspaper continued its work instead of closing. That is courage," he said.

"I hope we will all remain tolerant and supportive. After the mass uprising, Bangladesh went through an unimaginable shock, with much bloodshed for a society free from discrimination. I hope we can uphold that spirit."

Two workers remove signboards that have been fastened to roadside trees with iron nails during a drive by the Forest Department on Fuller Road near the Buet campus in Dhaka. This practice not only creates visual clutter but also damages trees, as nails pierce the bark and hinder natural growth -- a close-up of those nails is shown in the inset. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED





PHOTO: STAR

Bird poaching wanes in Sherpur

Local group, forest dept efforts curb illegal hunting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Bird poaching in Sherpur has declined sharply over the past several years, forest officials and local conservationists said, citing sustained monitoring, awareness campaigns and enforcement drives across key habitats in the district.

The decline is being attributed to efforts by the Sherpur Bird Conservation Society (SBCS), with assistance from the Forest Department. Since its formation in 2018, the volunteer-based organisation has carried out patrols, rescues and community outreach.

Over the past eight years, SBCS members have rescued more than 2,000 birds from poachers and released them into forests with the assistance of forest officials, the organisation said.

The rescued birds include kite, fairy kite, owl, falcon, teal, vulture, water hen and Indian spotted eagle.

"Now, only a few poachers are found hunting birds, especially migratory

species, in different areas of Sherpur, but we are trying our best to stop them through different activities," said Sujoy Malakar Joy, president of SBCS.

Muhammad Abdullah Al Amin, wildlife ranger of the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division in Sherpur,

Rafiq Mia, a former poacher from Pakhuria village in Sherpur Sadar, said he now works with SBCS and earns a living by rearing ducks with financial assistance from its members.

According to SBCS founder member Md Shahiduzzaman, about 361 bird species have been identified in Sherpur, particularly in areas such as Char Pankhimari, Bogadubi, Gazni, Rangtia, Kurcha and Madhutula.

Formed with five members, SBCS now has around 60 volunteers engaged in monitoring bird habitats and preventing poaching across the district.

The organisation has also received national recognition, including the National Wildlife Conservation Award 2025 and a Special Honorary Award for Bird Conservation at a bird fair organised at Jahangirnagar University in 2023, according to SBCS sources.



said, "The activities of the Sherpur Bird Conservation Society, with support from the Forest Department, have helped contain bird hunting sharply."

Md Samon Miah, range officer of the Balijuri Range in Sherpur's Sreebordi upazila, echoed him.

SBCS member Devdas Chanda Babu said the group initially focused

Fear in Teknaf as blasts heard across border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A series of loud explosions was heard from Myanmar across the Ukhia-Teknaf border in Cox's Bazar on Saturday night, triggering concern among local residents.

Several blasts occurred at intervals of three to four minutes around 11:00pm, according to people living along the border.

Sirajul Mostafa, ward-2 councillor of Whykong union in Teknaf, said the explosions shook houses in the area. He said at least three major blasts were heard as Myanmar's military resumed air attacks on villages near Maungdaw.

Contacted, Lt Col Ashiqur Rahman, commander of Border Guard Bangladesh Teknaf Battalion 2, said the explosions originated from the Myanmar side of the border. He said the situation along the Bangladesh side of the border remained normal and that BGB members were on alert.

Mohammad Kalam of Rohingya Camp-26 in Teknaf, citing relatives and contacts in Myanmar, said two Myanmar fighter jets carried out heavy bombardment on Balibazar and Naitong villages near Maungdaw.

Following the air strikes, the Arakan Army instructed around 250 Rohingya families to relocate, he said.

Many displaced families from the two villages have taken shelter with relatives in other areas, while some were attempting to cross the border into Bangladesh, he added.

The Arakan Army now controls 14 of the 17 towns in Myanmar's Rakhine state following intense clashes with the Myanmar military in December last year.

Nine brick kilns fined Tk 18 lakh in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The Department of Environment has fined nine brick kilns in Sirajganj a total of Tk 18 lakh for operating in violation of environmental laws.

The daylong drive was conducted in different locations across the district on Saturday, December 27, led by Masud Rana, assistant commissioner (Land) and executive magistrate, said Tuhin Alam, assistant director of DoE in Sirajganj.

During the drive, Munni Bricks was fined Tk 1 lakh, Bablu Bricks Tk 1.60 lakh, Star Bricks Tk 1.20 lakh, Nawab Bricks Tk 80,000, Shimu Orin Bricks Tk 3 lakh, Hero Bricks Tk 3 lakh, HS Bricks Tk 2.50 lakh, RKB Bricks Tk 3 lakh, and Talukdar Bricks Tk 2 lakh.

Police, fire service, and other officials and employees were present during the drive.

A chimney and raw bricks of one brick kiln were demolished while electricity connections of all the other kilns were severed, the DoE official said.



Police, fire service, and other officials and employees were present during the drive.

A chimney and raw bricks of one brick kiln were demolished while electricity connections of all the other kilns were severed, the DoE official said.



PHOTO: STAR

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

শ্রম ও কর্মসংস্থান মন্ত্রণালয়

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তারিখঃ ১৩ পৌষ ১৪৩২
২৮ ডিসেম্বর ২০২৫

প্যানেল আইনজীবী তালিকাভুক্তির বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বিষয়ঃ প্যানেল আইনজীবী নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে আহ্বান আহ্বান

শ্রম ও কর্মসংস্থান মন্ত্রণালয়ের পক্ষে ও বিপক্ষে দায়েরকৃত মামলা পরিচালনার জন্য প্যানেল আইনজীবী নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে আহ্বান আহ্বান করা হচ্ছে। শ্রম ও কর্মসংস্থান মন্ত্রণালয়ের ওয়েবসাইটে (www.mole.gov.bd) এ ২৮ ডিসেম্বর ২০২৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দ তারিখের নং ৮০.০০.০০০০.০১৫.১১.০০১.২০ (পার্ট-২)-১৮৬ নম্বর স্মারকে বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রাপ্ত যাবে। আগ্রহী আইনজীবীগণ ২৮ জানুয়ারী ২০২৬ তারিখের মধ্যে বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়ের ০১ নং গেটে রাস্তিক শ্রম ও কর্মসংস্থান মন্ত্রণালয়ের টেক্নার বক্সে সরাসরি/ডাকযোগে প্রয়োজনীয় কাগজপত্রাদিসহ আবেদন জমা দিতে পারবেন।

১২১২১২১২১

রামকৃষ্ণ বর্মণ

সিনিয়র সহকারী সচিব (আইন)

Government of the People Republic of Bangladesh

Bangladesh Police

Office of the Superintendent of Police

16 Johnson Road, Dhaka-1100.

Memo No. 12490/E

Date: 28 December 2025

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of goods as follows.

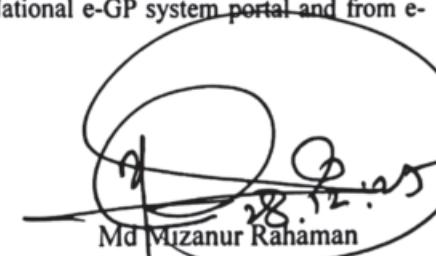
Tender ID NO.	Package Name	OnlineTender Notice Publication Date & Time	Online Tender Closing Date & Time	Method of Tender
1203499	Polao Rice	28 December 2025 12.00	08 January 2026 12.00	OTM
1203500	Porter Works (Rationcommodities Loading & unloading)	28 December 2025 12.00	08 January 2026 12.00	OTM
1203501	Transport(Sugar Transport from all mills & General)	28 December 2025 12.00	08 January 2026 12.00	OTM
1203502	Fire Wood	28 December 2025 12.00	08 January 2026 12.00	OTM
1203503	Wheat Crushing	28 December 2025 12.00	08 January 2026 12.00	OTM
1203504	Edible Oil(soybean)	28 December 2025 12.00	08 January 2026 12.00	OTM
1203505	Masor Dal(Lentil)	28 December 2025 12.00	08 January 2026 12.00	OTM

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for last downloading the e-Tender Document from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches up to date & time.

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


Md Mizanur Rahaman
BP NO : 79061119770
Superintendent of Police, Dhaka.
Phone : 02-41051062
E-mail : spdhaka@police.gov.bd

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার				
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ				
পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়				
হাইওয়ে পুলিশ সিলেট রিজিয়ন, সিলেট				
তারিখঃ /১২/২০২৫				
দরপত্র নং-০২/২০২৫-২০২৬				
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি (Tender Notice) ০২/২০২৫-২০২৬				
The Public Procurement Regulation-2008/09 মোতাবেক ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বছরে তৃতীয় ও ৪র্থ কোর্টারে রেশন স্টেটারের নিম্নবর্ণিত আইটেম/মালামাল সরবরাহ/কাজের জন্য সীমান্তব্যুক্ত যাবে প্রত্যেক টিকালুর/ব্যবসায়ী ও সরবরাহকারী বাস্তি/প্রতিক্রিয়ানের নিকট হতে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।				
১	মালামাল/বিভাগ	:	প্রযোজ্ঞ মন্ত্রণালয়/বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ	
২	সংস্থা	:	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ	
৩	ক্রম কঠুণ্ড	:	পুলিশ সুপার, হাইওয়ে পুলিশ সিলেট রিজিয়ন, সিলেট	
৪	দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি	:	দরপত্র (Tender)	
৫	বাজেট ও বরাদ্দের উৎস	:	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ বিভাগ	
৬	দরপত্র নম্বর	:	০২/২০২৫-২০২৬	
৭	দরপত্রের প্রকাশের তারিখ	:	২৪/১২/২০২৫	
৮	দরপত্র সিডিউল বিতরণের সর্বশেষ তারিখ	:	১৯/১২/২০২৫	
৯	দরপত্র দাখিলের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	১৯/১২/২০২৫	
১০	দরপত্র দাখিলের অফিসের আয়োজন ও সময়	:	১৯/১২/২০২৫	
১১	দরপত্র মূল্যায়নের তারিখ	:	২০/১২/২০২৫	
১২	দরপত্র সম্পাদকারী অফিস ও ঠিকানা	:	পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, হাইওয়ে পুলিশ, সিলেট রিজিয়ন, সিলেট	
১৩	দরপত্র সিডিউল বিতরণের অফিসের ঠিকানা	:	সমেলন কক্ষ (২য় তলা), পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, হাইওয়ে পুলিশ, সিলেট রিজিয়ন, সিলেট	
১৪	দরপত্র আইটেমের বর্ণনা	:	প্রদর্শন আইটেম/বর্ণনা	
১৫	অর্থনৈতিক কোড ও খাতের নাম	:	দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য টেক্নার সিডিউলিং	কার্য সমন্বাদের সময়
১৬	উন্নতমানের দেশীয় ছেটি দানা মন্ত্রণালয় সরবরাহ	:	৭৫০/-	৩২,০০০/-
১৭	উন			

star BUSINESS

State firms' classified loans doubled in FY25
BJMC accounted for 88% of all classified loans

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Classified loans of state-run firms more than doubled in fiscal year 2024-25 (FY25), with the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) accounting for nearly 88 percent of the total amount.

According to the Bangladesh Economic Review, classified loans of state-run firms rose to Tk 429 crore at the end of FY25, up from Tk 199 crore a year earlier. Of that amount, BJMC alone held Tk 377 crore, equivalent to 87.88 percent of the total, up sharply from Tk 131 crore in the previous fiscal year.

The surge highlights the continued non-performance of BJMC, even after the government shut down 25 state-owned jute mills in 2020, citing persistent losses, high production costs and inefficiencies.

In April 2021, BJMC, which manages all government-owned jute factories and industries in Bangladesh, invited private investors to lease out 17 mills for periods ranging from five to 20 years in an effort to reduce fiscal pressure.

More than a dozen mills have since been handed over to private operators under lease agreements. However, the remaining operational mills continue to incur losses, keeping BJMC's loan classification under stress.

Among other state-run enterprises, Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) had the second-highest classified loans, unchanged at Tk 21 crore during the year, the data showed.

At the end of June 2025, the outstanding debt of state-run enterprises rose by more than 33 percent year-on-year to Tk 63,357 crore.

BADC, which supplies agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilisers, remained the largest debtor, with its outstanding debt increasing by around 30 percent to Tk 18,059 crore.

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) -- responsible for importing, distributing, and marketing petroleum products -- emerged as the second-largest debtor. During FY25, its outstanding debt surged to Tk 9,579 crore from just Tk 175 crore a year earlier.

Outstanding debt at the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) rose by 76 percent to Tk 7,339 crore. Loans to the Bangladesh Power Development Board -- responsible for planning, developing, and operating the nation's power infrastructure -- climbed to Tk 5,243 crore from Tk 1,187 crore.

Return filing deadline extended till Jan 31

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The deadline for individual taxpayers to file income tax returns has been extended by another month, pushing the new cut-off date to January 31.

In an office order issued yesterday, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) said it will accept returns for the tax year 2025-26 until January 31, citing "public interest" as the reason for the extension.

The original deadline was November 30 this year. The revenue authority had earlier extended it to December 31, continuing a familiar pattern.

In previous years too, the November deadline was often pushed back by a month.

Currently, there are around 1.25 crore holders of taxpayer identification numbers (TIN) in Bangladesh. As of yesterday afternoon, 29.20 lakh taxpayers had submitted their returns for the ongoing tax year, according to the revenue board.

For the current tax year, filing income tax returns online has been made mandatory. The online filing requirement, however, has been relaxed for several categories of taxpayers.

These include people aged 65 and above, persons with disabilities or special needs, Bangladeshis living abroad, legal representatives submitting returns for deceased taxpayers, and foreign nationals working in Bangladesh.

Members of these groups may still choose to file online if they wish.

Last year, after multiple deadline extensions, February 15 was set as the final date for individual taxpayers. Returns can still be filed after the deadline by paying a penalty.

MD ASADUZZAMAN

Bangladesh is ending 2025 with little sign of recovery in its job market, as factory closures, mass layoffs, weak private investment and sluggish economic growth combined to deepen employment stress across both the formal and informal sectors.

Joblessness has been a persistent problem for years and helped shape the mass uprising in August 2024 that led to the ouster of the Awami League-led government. A year and a half after that political changeover, employment

operational crises following the ouster of the Awami League government.

The closures laid off more than 12,500 workers in the ready-made garment sector. The group's Chairman, Nazrul Islam Mazumder, who was close to the previous government, is now behind bars.

Beximco Group, another major industrial employer, also continued to shed jobs. In February, Beximco Limited announced fresh layoffs affecting nearly 8,000 workers across five manufacturing units at its industrial park in Gazipur, citing a lack of work orders.

This followed earlier layoffs of nearly 40,000 workers across 15 apparel units towards the end of 2024.

Similar to Nassa Group, Beximco Group Vice-Chairman Salman F Rahman is now in jail. Rahman was an influential

and Nassa.

Nearly 33,000 workers at the Beximco Industrial Park and Beximco Group received payments, while 17,134 workers from the Nassa Group were also paid.

BILS Executive Director Ahmed described these interventions as commendable but insufficient, arguing that a coordinated strategy was needed to prevent factory closures in the first place.

Weak investment further constrained job creation. Private sector credit growth fell to a four-year low of 6.23 percent in October 2025, down from 8.30 percent a year earlier, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

The slowdown reflected weak demand for capital machinery, limited business expansion and persistent operational challenges.

but the job market remains largely stagnant," he said.

Mashroor said the biggest challenge was for fresh graduates, as the number of entry-level jobs remained far below the number of graduates entering the labour market each year.

Some job seekers said government recruitment showed slight improvement.

"The number of government job circulars was comparatively higher in 2025, as the previous year was marked by prolonged turbulence," said Abdul Mannan, a graduate student at Jahangirnagar University.

The publication of recruitment notices for several posts that had remained vacant for a long time generated renewed hope among job seekers, he said.

Yet competition remained intense.

"Almost every week, I sit for competitive job exams in Dhaka," said Md Ekramul Haque, a mathematics graduate from Sirajganj Government College. "But the competition is intense. Last week, I sat for an office assistant exam under the Ministry of Public Works, where there were only 161 posts, but more than one lakh candidates applied."

"Although there were some signs of recovery from the 2024 crisis early in the year, the economy soon lost steam," Rizwanul Islam, former special adviser for the employment sector at International Labour Organization, said.

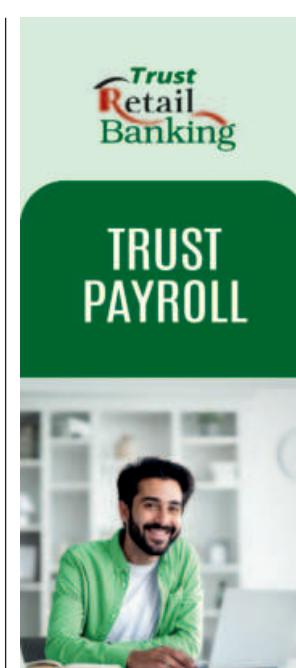
"Continued declines in real wages created a double whammy for the poor and low-income groups," he said. "From jobless growth, we have now moved to a growthless and jobless economy. It is effectively a two-year holiday for the economy."

MA Razzaque, chairman of the Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID), said, "Generating employment has become a major challenge because the economy slowed significantly."

Manufacturing growth in earlier years failed to translate into meaningful job creation, and now manufacturing itself has weakened, leaving little scope for expansion while employment in the sector has declined, he said.

"There are two key problems: new employment is not being created, and existing employment is overwhelmingly informal, dominated by low productivity activities. Graduate unemployment is also very high."

He said the next elected government would need direct state intervention in several areas to generate jobs in the short term, stressing that the state must become more effective.



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BB buys \$3b from banks so far in FY26

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Greenback purchases by the Bangladesh Bank (BB) from the local interbank market have crossed the \$3 billion mark in the ongoing fiscal year, reflecting continued intervention by the central bank to shore up foreign exchange reserves.

In its latest round, the central bank bought \$115 million from three commercial banks at an exchange rate of Tk 122.30 per dollar yesterday, officials said.

The transaction will be settled today, with the cut-off rate also fixed at Tk 122.30.

With the latest purchase, Bangladesh Bank's total dollar acquisition in December rose to \$920.50 million.

Cumulatively, the central bank has purchased \$3.05 billion so far in the current fiscal year 2025-26, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

57,000 tonnes of US wheat arrive

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh has received nearly 57,000 tonnes of wheat from the United States under a second government-to-government contract, the food ministry said yesterday.

A ship, MV Evita, arrived at Chattogram port carrying 56,920 tonnes of wheat, marking the first consignment of 220,000 tonnes to be imported under this deal.

Earlier, under the first government-to-government contract, Bangladesh imported 220,000 tonnes of wheat from the US.

The government initiated these agreements earlier this year to help reduce the bilateral trade deficit and secure favourable tariffs for Bangladesh's exports to the US market.

Spinners blame India for dumping yarn as imports surge 137%

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Local spinning mills are left with Tk 12,000 crore of unsold stock as cheap yarn from India floods the market, according to the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA).

BTMA leaders say yarn imports from the neighbouring country rose 137 percent during the April-October period this year, as Indian traders are dumping it in Bangladesh at more than \$0.30 per kilogramme below domestic prices.

As a result, nearly 50 local spinning mills have closed in recent years after failing to survive the competition, said BTMA President Showkat Aziz Russell.

Speaking at a press conference at Gulshan Club in Dhaka yesterday, he added that one of his own mills has shut down, while another is struggling to stay afloat.

"These mills had an investment of Tk 500-Tk 700 crore each, and it is difficult to start them anew," he said.

The BTMA president said Bangladesh should reduce its dependence on Indian yarn. In the past, India stopped cotton exports to Bangladesh without any prior notice, causing severe losses for local spinners.

"If Bangladesh depends heavily on Indian yarn, they may stop supplying it suddenly, putting our garment sector in trouble," he said.

In April this year, Bangladesh imposed a ban on importing yarn from India through land ports to protect local textile producers from cheaper Indian yarn and

LOCAL SPINNERS

Sit on Tk 12,000cr unsold stock	Compete with \$2.5 per kg Indian yarn with \$3 rate	Struggle with raw material shortages	Saw 50 mills shut in recent years
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YARN IMPORTED FROM INDIA

\$2b in FY25	\$950m in Apr-Oct 2025	137% year-on-year growth
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IMPORT OVERRELiance

Threatens \$23b investment in primary textile sector

Poses risks to entire local apparel industry



MILLERS DEMAND

Restricting imports of selected Indian yarn types	10% cash support for garments using local yarn
---	--

Expanding EDF, lowering bank interest, providing loan grace periods	Facilitating US cotton stockpiling
---	------------------------------------

included facilitating warehousing for cotton merchants to allow stockpiling of US cotton for use in local mills, as promised by Dhaka during reciprocal tariff negotiations.

At the programme, other millers said they cannot compete with cheap Indian yarn, currently priced at \$2.50 per kilogramme, while local mills must sell at \$3 per kilogramme due to shortages of raw materials such as cotton.

They called for at least 10 percent cash incentives for garment exports that use locally spun yarn, an increase in the Export Development Fund (EDF) at lower interest rates, and reduced bank lending rates.

Former BTMA director Razeek Haider described the influx as an act of "economic aggression," designed to "pressure" Bangladesh's primary textile sector. Combined, the two sectors contribute \$40 billion in exports. His recommendations

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Another former BTMA president, Mohammad Ali Khokon, said that Indian control of Bangladesh's backward linkage industries could eventually extend to the garment sector.

A year without job security

Layoffs outpaced hiring, while employment shifted toward low-quality informal activity

MD ASADUZZAMAN

Bangladesh is ending 2025 with little sign of recovery in its job market, as factory closures, mass layoffs, weak private investment and sluggish economic growth combined to deepen employment stress across both the formal and informal sectors.

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House rent climbs for three consecutive quarters

Arbitrary increase, slack law enforcement, high inflation to blame



MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Accommodation costs in Bangladesh have risen for three consecutive quarters this year, adding to the financial strain on middle and lower-income households already under pressure from high inflation.

The House Rent Index (HRI), which tracks quarterly changes in rental costs, climbed to 5.19 percent in the July-September quarter of fiscal 2025-26, up slightly from 5.16 percent in April-June and 5.14 percent in January-March, according to data compiled by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

On a year-on-year basis, however, rent growth has eased. In the July-September quarter of 2024, the HRI stood at 5.91 percent.

The index reflects rental costs across three types of housing -- pucca, semi-pucca and mud houses. Data are collected nationwide, covering both urban and rural areas.

"Typically, house rents tend to rise either at the beginning or the middle of the year. But that seasonal pattern is no longer holding," said a BBS official familiar with the survey.

"When a tenant moves out, landlords often raise the rent immediately, which puts automatic pressure on the next tenant," the official added.

House rent is part of the non-food component of the consumer price index. With prices of essential commodities also rising, higher rents are compounding the burden on low- and fixed-income households already struggling with

prolonged inflation.

Inflation rose to 8.29 percent in November, driven by non-food inflation of 9.08 percent, according to BBS's monthly data.

Bangladesh has been grappling with elevated inflation for nearly three years. Consumer price inflation remained above 9 percent until May 2025 and has stayed above 8 percent since then.

SM Nazar Hossain, vice-president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said landlords are increasing rents arbitrarily, even amid high inflation, exploiting the wide gap between housing demand and supply in Dhaka.

"Although the Premises Rent Control Act was enacted many years ago, there is no implementation," he said. "If the law were enforced, rent levels could be controlled to some extent, but the government is not

playing an effective role."

"There is no system at all, no structured mechanism," Hossain said. "As soon as demand rises, rents are increased immediately."

He said the practice is more prevalent in labour-intensive and high-demand neighbourhoods. "When one tenant leaves, the rent goes up right away. And because demand is strong, another tenant is always willing to move in, even at a higher rate."

"We keep talking about it and the media keeps writing about it, but nothing is changing," he said. "The real problem is that there is a law, but no enforcement."

Hossain, however, welcomed a recent initiative by the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), saying it could provide some relief if implemented effectively.

Sylhet Gas Fields holds 43rd AGM

STAR BUSINESS DESK

The 43rd annual general meeting (AGM) of Sylhet Gas Fields Limited, a gas and petroleum products producing company under Petrobangla, was held on December 18.

The meeting took place at Petrocentre, the company's Dhaka liaison office, according to a press release.

The meeting was presided over by the chairman of the board of directors, Abul Mansur Md Faizullah, and attended by Md Rezanur Rahman, chairman of Petrobangla, alongside shareholders, board members, and Managing Director Md Abdul Jalil Pramanik, and the company's general managers.

According to the audited financial statements for fiscal year 2024-25, the company earned Tk 2,740.82 crore in revenue from the production, processing and sale of natural gas and petroleum products, including condensate, petrol, diesel, kerosene, octane, NGL and LPG.

During the period, it deposited Tk 876.53 crore with the government exchequer in the form of supplementary duty, VAT, income tax, dividend and DSL, while posting a net profit of Tk 538.59 crore.

NCC Bank signs supply chain finance deal with Akij Resource

STAR BUSINESS DESK

NCC Bank has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with six companies of Akij Resource Group to introduce a supply chain finance (SCF) arrangement for their designated suppliers.

The companies include Akij Essentials Limited, Hashem Rice Mills Limited, Akij Agro Feed Limited, Akij Ispat Limited, Nobayon Traders Limited and Akij Cement Company Limited, according to a press release.

Under the agreement, NCC Bank will extend supply chain financing facilities to eligible suppliers of the companies, enabling them to meet working capital requirements through timely access to finance against buyer-approved invoices.

The signing ceremony was held yesterday at NCC Bank's head office in Motijheel, Dhaka. Md Habibur Rahman, deputy managing director of NCC Bank, and Md Ruhul Islam, director of Akij Agro Feed Limited, signed the agreement on behalf of

their respective organisations. Md Habibur Rahman, deputy managing director of NCC Bank, and Md Ruhul Islam, director of Akij Agro Feed Limited, pose for photographs alongside officials of both organisations at NCC Bank's head office in Motijheel yesterday.

Among others, M Khurshed Alam, additional managing director, Md Zakir Anam and Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, deputy managing directors, Sharif Mohammad Mahsin, senior vice-president and head of SME, Mufti Mustafizur Rahman, senior vice-president and head of branch and

business at NCC Bank Bhaban branch, and Sheikh Sadi, chief treasury officer of Akij Resource Group, were present at the event.

Sohanur Rahaman Sohan, deputy chief operating officer of Akij Resource Group, along with other senior officials from both organisations, also attended.

ACI declares 25% cash dividend



M Anis Ud Dowla, chairman of ACI, attends the 52nd annual general meeting of the company yesterday. Other senior officials were also present.

PHOTO: ACI PLC

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Advanced Chemical Industries (ACI) PLC has declared a 25 percent cash dividend for the

financial year that ended on June 30, 2025.

The decision was taken at the 52nd annual general meeting (AGM), which was held yesterday through a digital platform, according

to a press release. The meeting was presided over by M Anis Ud Dowla, chairman of ACI.

Shareholders approved the audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2025, along with the reports of the directors and auditors of the company. They also endorsed the 25 percent cash dividend for the year.

Addressing the meeting, Arif Dowla, managing director of the company, highlighted key business developments and responded to issues raised by shareholders.

He expressed gratitude for the continued support and cooperation of all stakeholders and particularly acknowledged the contribution and efforts of the company's employees.

Trust Bank unveils annual sustainability report

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Trust Bank PLC has unveiled its first-ever annual sustainability report for 2024, marking a milestone in the bank's commitment to sustainable banking and environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices.

The report was unveiled recently by Chowdhury Liakat Ali, director of the Sustainable Finance Department (SFD) of Bangladesh Bank, and Ahsan Zaman Chowdhury, managing director and chief executive officer of Trust Bank PLC, in the presence of senior executives and officials of the bank, according to a press release.

Among others, Akhlasur Rahman Bhuiyan, deputy managing director and chief risk officer, Md Kamal Hossain Sarker, deputy managing director and head of IBD, and ABM Mizanur Rahman, senior executive vice-president and head of the Credit Risk Management Division and Sustainable Finance Unit, were present at the programme.



Chowdhury Liakat Ali, director of the Sustainable Finance Department of Bangladesh Bank, and Ahsan Zaman Chowdhury, managing director and chief executive officer of Trust Bank PLC, attend the event in Dhaka recently. Other senior officials of the bank were also present.

PHOTO: TRUST BANK PLC

DHAKA MONDAY DECEMBER 29, 2025

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The Daily Star

9

IP rights enforcement key to higher investment
AmCham says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh cannot significantly expand exports or attract foreign direct investment without proper enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), said Syed Ershad Ahmed, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham).

"Effective enforcement of IPRs would bring greater transparency to business... while corruption cannot be completely eliminated, it can be reduced to a manageable and tolerable level, and efforts are underway to achieve that," he said while speaking to journalists yesterday at an event organised by AmCham at the Sheraton Dhaka in Banani.

Ahmed said sustained advocacy has helped push the government from a limited trade office structure toward establishing IPR laws and an industry-focused institutional framework.

He added that logistics, once a neglected sector, has now become central to discussions on competitiveness and investment.

"AmCham is working across several sectors, including logistics, IPRs, digital financing, energy, and agriculture, with logistics set to become a key priority in the coming period. We want to develop the overall ecosystem in Bangladesh. If we can develop the overall business ecosystem, overall investment in Bangladesh will increase," he said.

AmCham president pointed to the growing number of educated but unemployed young people, saying job creation should be the top priority of the next government

On employment, Ahmed pointed to the growing number of educated but unemployed young people, saying job creation should be the top priority of the next government.

He cautioned that while entrepreneurship is often encouraged, it requires significant capital, and large-scale job creation is more realistically driven by higher investment and export growth.

Discussing the investment climate, Ahmed said policy unpredictability remains a major concern for investors. Although AmCham has submitted detailed, sector-wise recommendations to key ministries through its Research and Advocacy Cell, he said meaningful follow-through has been limited.

"Investors need policy stability and predictability, which are usually supported by a free and fair election and a stable political environment," Ahmed said.

He also highlighted ongoing barriers to foreign direct investment, including corruption, energy shortages, and weak legal and physical infrastructure.

He said wider use of digital systems and stronger IPR enforcement could improve transparency and help reduce corruption. While acknowledging progress in areas such as fully online income tax filing, he said much more needs to be done to create a world-class investment environment.

Ahmed also underscored the importance of national branding, noting that global investors are familiar with countries such as India, Vietnam, and the Philippines, while Bangladesh remains relatively underrepresented.

On women's empowerment, he said female students are performing strongly in higher education but continue to face social and cultural barriers to entering the workforce. "True empowerment requires a change in mindset at both family and societal levels," he said.

Referring to technological development, Ahmed said the IT sector has raised concerns about high taxes and the limited availability of graphics processing unit (GPU) servers needed for artificial intelligence development. These constraints weaken Bangladesh's ability to compete in global technology markets, he added.

AmCham treasurer Md Mamun M Rashel said there is a gap between policy announcements, particularly in areas such as artificial intelligence, and actual implementation.

He added that import barriers for high-end technologies are further constraining sector growth and called for more specific and actionable reporting to help the government better address these challenges.



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AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH

KATE WINSLET

Film legend talks directorial debut

SADIA KHALID REETI

Kate Winslet, throughout the years, has made herself undeniable in world cinema with her body of work. The *Titanic*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *Wonder Wheel* star made her directorial debut this December with family drama *Goodbye June*. Written by her son, Joe Anders, the story traces the final days of an ailing woman (played by Helen Mirren), as her family comes together to bid farewell

for 16 days. So, it was quite nerve wrecking because I had to get everything done. For the first three weeks of the shoot, my son was actually overseas working on something as an actor because he is also an actor.

He has fantastic opinions and really great taste. He's very interested in the filmmaking process and wants to learn and wants to be able to grow as a writer and grow as an actor. So, for him being around and all of that, I think it was very educational, quite honestly.

We're very lucky because we do have a very close relationship. But it was special to work with him in a different way, as colleagues, you know, on equal playing fields. He was a first-time writer, I was a first-time director. So, it did mean that we had each other in those moments when we're like, "Oh my God. Ok. What's next? Let's do this. It's gonna be great."

TDS: Your son found the inspiration to write this film from watching the family come together when his grandmother passed away. So, were there parts of the film that were autobiographical?

KW: No. It isn't an autobiographical story. It is a fictional family and it's a fictional set of circumstances and yes it is accurate that my own family were able to come together, but how geographically almost impossible that was

that was remarkable and my son was a teenager at the time and everyone felt it. Everyone was a part of going

through this loss and how we were all there for her because we all loved her and we all came from this one woman. So, he took that as his emotional backdrop and then invented his own story from there.

We have a big, big family on his mother's side, me, but also on his father's side, there's a huge family too. So, he drew from many different stories that he was aware of and created this particular story in which a family all come together against all odds and make it good for the woman who's passing away.

Sadia Khalid Reeti is a film critic and screenwriter. She served as a Fipresci jury at the Cannes Film Festival and is a voter for the Golden Globes.

GOODBYE JUNE



Kate Winslet during the Zoom interview with our correspondent

around Christmas.

The film is set to release in Netflix soon. She also stars in the film as one of June's daughters, Julie, who is the busiest and the most financially responsible of the four siblings. The source of conflict between the characters and their individual backgrounds may not have been fleshed out in the film but what the film elaborately deals with is their concerted efforts to make June's passing comfortable and memorable.

Before its Netflix release on December 24, the *Titanic* star shared her experience of working with her screenwriter son in this exclusive one-on-one interview with The Daily Star.

The Daily Star: Let me start by saying you are incredibly loved here in Bangladesh.

Kate Winslet: Thank you very much.

TDS: You said when your son was writing the script, you thought it would make a great movie. Was there any particular scene or dialogue that spoke to you when you first read it?

KW: I think the thing that spoke to me most of all was actually how real all of the characters felt. I felt they were extremely relatable. I think some of the quieter scenes between Bernie and June I found to be particularly touching because I lost my mother, but I was never in the room when my own parents were having those quiet conversations between themselves. I found those scenes probably to be among the most touching of all.

TDS: Having the writer on set can be a source of helpful notes or creative conflict. How was it for you having your son on-set?

KW: Honestly, it was wonderful. I loved it so much. We only had seven weeks to shoot this film and I only had Helen Mirren



PHOTO: COLLECTED

I think the thing that spoke to me most of all was actually how real all of the characters felt. I felt they were extremely relatable. I think some of the quieter scenes between Bernie and June I found to be particularly touching because I lost my mother, but I was never in the room when my own parents were having those quiet conversations between themselves. I found those scenes probably to be among the most touching of all.

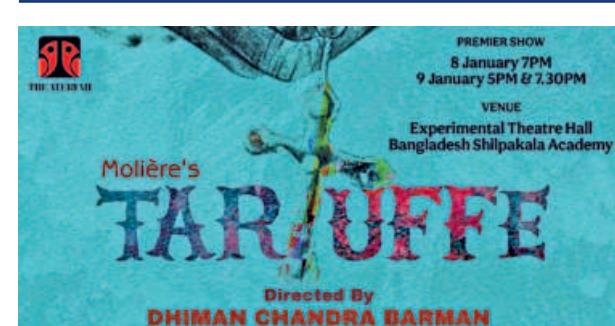
TV TALKIES

WAKE UP DEAD MAN: A Knives Out Mystery

Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery is a suspense-filled murder mystery where detective Benoit Blanc investigates an unsolvable crime inside a church full of suspects. Directed by Rian Johnson and starring Daniel Craig, the film was released on November 26. Beyond the mystery, it explores themes of truth, morality, and hidden guilt. The film is now streaming on Netflix, where it is currently ranking among the top ten movies on the platform.



OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



The Premiere of Moliere's *TARTUFFE*
Jan 8-9 | 5 pm and 7 pm onwards
Experimental Theatre Hall, BSA



Echoes of Hope - Children for Children
Jan 6-9 | 3 pm to 5 pm
Alliance Française de Dhaka

TRENDY STREAMS

NETFLIX

Stranger Things



HBO MAX

It: Welcome to Derry



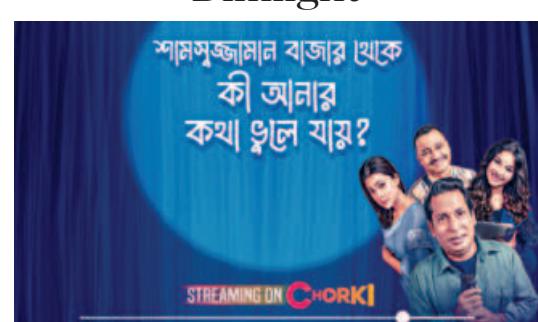
PRIME VIDEO

Fallout



CHORKI

Dimlight



WHAT'S PLAYING

I Love You So' by The Walters

I Love You So' feels like a whispered confession, tender and slightly undone. The Walters keep it spare; soft guitar, an unhurried rhythm, vocals that hover somewhere between devotion and doubt. It's the sound of loving someone so deeply it almost scares you, of wanting to hold on while bracing for what might slip away.

Released in 2014, the song found its second life years later, drifting back into collective consciousness through playlists and social feeds. Its resurgence was unstoppable, carrying *I Love You So'* to hundreds of millions of streams. The appeal lies in its emotional clarity: nothing overstated, nothing hidden.

This is a track for the in-between moments; headphones on, lights low, feelings unresolved. Romantic, fragile, and achingly sincere, *I Love You So'* reminds us that sometimes the softest songs leave the deepest marks.



Shielding Harvests, Securing Futures: Climate Insurance for Bangladesh

A roundtable titled "From Risk to Resilience: Institutionalising Climate Risk Insurance into Bangladesh's Social Protection and Disaster Management Mechanisms" was held on 26 November 2025 at The Daily Star Centre, Dhaka. Jointly organised by The Daily Star, the World Food Programme (WFP), and Oxfam, the discussion brought together policymakers, regulators, insurance industry leaders, development partners, academics, and representatives from government and civil society. The roundtable aimed to explore ways to mainstream climate risk insurance within Bangladesh's national resilience framework, strengthen institutional and fiscal support, and ensure affordable, inclusive protection for vulnerable communities facing increasing climate-induced disasters and livelihood risks.



Dr Suborna Barua
Professor, Department of International Business
PhD in Climate Finance

Climate risk insurance remains largely experimental in Bangladesh and needs formal institutional support. Insured households recover more quickly and avoid post-disaster debt. Studies show that delivering insurance through cooperatives and local farmer groups is most effective. However, a major affordability gap: poor farmers want coverage but cannot afford full premiums. There are several barriers: Bangladesh has no dedicated legal framework or fiscal incentives for climate insurance, insurers have little actuarial capacity for agricultural risks, and reinsurance markets are largely closed to these risks. The request to the government is to establish clear regulations, fiscal incentives such as premium subsidies or VAT relief and a national disaster fund for climate insurance. IDRA and relevant ministries must take joint ownership of this issue, making insurance a core part of national resilience policy. To close the affordability and capacity gaps, we call on the government to enact a dedicated legal framework for climate insurance, introduce fiscal incentives like premium subsidies, VAT relief, and a national disaster risk fund, strengthen actuarial and data capacity, open reinsurance markets, and formally recognise cooperatives and MFIs as distribution partners. IDRA, MoDMR and Finance must jointly own and lead institutionalisation.



Maribeth Black
Deputy Head of Programme
World Food Programme (WFP)

The UN WFP has been promoting an integrated risk-management approach to build resilience among climate-affected communities. Climate shocks in Bangladesh are intensifying and hitting poor smallholder farmers hardest. In collaboration with partners including Oxfam and Green Delta Insurance, WFP has helped develop index-based insurance products for floods,



indemnity policies, with weather-index schemes only at a limited scale. A government crop insurance program from the 1970s that did not yield good results, but today's digital tools make parametric insurance more viable. An ADB-funded pilot with 10,000 farmers saw limited success because it covered only small, low-risk areas. Insurance functions like a cooperative fund: if policies are not broadly distributed, the system cannot be profitable. There are two major barriers: data and distribution. Reliable weather data are needed to set and verify parametric triggers, yet obtaining real-time climate information remains challenging. Moreover, reaching marginal farmers requires intermediaries who earn commissions. Insurers want to cut costs, so regulators need to clarify rules so that microfinance institutions or digital platforms can legally distribute climate insurance and be properly compensated, keeping premiums affordable.

Tarik Ur Rahman
Consultant
Green Delta PLC

Public-private partnership and IDRA's support are essential to expanding climate insurance. A dedicated microinsurance regulation so companies can introduce more tailored products into the market. Rahman described Green Delta's experience: since 2015, its weather-index programs have grown from 215 farmers to 1.53 million farmers across 35 districts, with payouts totalling about 188 million taka to 336,000 claimants. The ongoing pilots in yield-index, flood, livestock and fisheries insurance, as well as new schemes to cover cyclone losses. This momentum could accelerate with the right regulatory support and fiscal incentives. Notably, the 15% VAT on insurance premiums, arguing that the government already exempts similar products in export-oriented industries. Removing this tax would lower costs for consumers and could expand insurance coverage by roughly 15 per cent.

Mohammad Emran Hassan
Head of Climate Justice & Natural Resources Rights
Oxfam in Bangladesh

While climate insurance can engage the private sector in adaptation, its rollout must be firmly anchored in climate justice. The marginal communities in LDCs like Bangladesh cannot realistically bear the full cost of premiums, which is why governments and global climate finance must bridge this gap. National mechanisms, such as Bangladesh's Climate Change Trust Fund and international loss-and-damage windows (e.g., FRID) can serve as viable sources of premium subsidies. However, if international funds are mobilised, reinsurance should remain domestic: ceding risks abroad would allow part of the climate aid to leak out of vulnerable economies. Keeping reinsurance local ensures that international climate finance circulates within Bangladesh, strengthens national financial systems, and delivers its full intended benefit to climate-vulnerable communities.

Imanun Nabi Khan
Assistant Country Representative
FAO Bangladesh

FAO is helping integrate risk financing into agricultural planning, including Bangladesh's forthcoming Agriculture Outlook

2050. Smallholder farmers need to organise in cooperatives or producer groups for insurance to reach them, and extension programs are being updated to include financial and insurance literacy. Currently, less than 1% of Bangladeshis hold life insurance, highlighting the challenge of expanding coverage to crops, livestock and fisheries. Citing climate projections of higher temperatures and more extreme rainfall by 2050, more frequent floods and cyclones will damage production and make insurance increasingly necessary. FAO's efforts to strengthen farmer collectives: offering learning grants, helping create shared service centres and providing low-interest loans. Once these cooperatives mature, they will be well-positioned to partner with insurers as distribution channels.

Monirul Hoque
National Programme Officer, Insurance and Risk Finance Facility
UNDP Bangladesh

Building a climate insurance ecosystem requires strengthening institutions and data systems. With only two of 43 non-life insurers currently active in climate products, the market lacks reliable data to model rural weather risks. Cutting the 15% premium tax would reduce government revenue, so alternatives (like adjusting other taxes or reinsurance contributions) should be explored to offset the loss. It is better to expand the focus to an "inclusive insurance" framework that includes life insurance and other products, to balance risk pools and attract private investment. Many microfinance schemes currently labelled as insurance must be formally regulated. UNDP is helping develop a comprehensive microinsurance framework covering mutuals, takaful and MFIs. The insurers' association or a multi-agency forum could lead a technical working group on climate insurance policy. Furthermore, UNDP is assisting with a unified data platform for the industry and funding training for more actuaries to build local expertise.

Dr Md. Rashedur Rahman Sardar
Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Finance (Finance Division, Ministry of Planning)

The Finance Division acknowledges the necessity of climate risk insurance mechanisms. However, the feasibility of government support is heavily influenced by significant resource constraints. Currently, the national budget lacks explicit codes for disaster funding, forcing the government to rely on "implicit support." This means that when unexpected disasters occur, funds must be reallocated from other sectors, creating friction and reducing resources elsewhere.

The fiscal reality poses a major challenge: revenue collection by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) is currently only 6.78% of GDP, while expenditure sits at 11.33%. This low revenue base limits the government's ability to provide explicit financial backing compared to global standards. While a Disaster Risk Financing Strategy has been developed in collaboration with the MoDMR, the contingency funding remains implicit rather than a dedicated budget line. Regarding fiscal exemptions, the speaker defers to the NBR but emphasises that strict governance and the selection of appropriate financial instruments are

critical for the success of any scheme. Ultimately, the government remains open to examining a well-structured proposal that addresses these fiscal and governance realities.

Nazmul Alam
Deputy Secretary, NEC-ECNEC and Coordinating Division, Ministry of Planning

The Ministry views Climate Risk Insurance (CRI) as a supplementary measure rather than a standalone solution for climate resilience. To inform future policy, the government should look to the ongoing "Jamuna River Sustainable Management Project," a 95 crore BDT initiative targeting 100,000 beneficiaries. With 35% of its budget allocated to premium support and 43% to consultancy, a midterm evaluation of this project is essential to understand micro-level impacts and beneficiary experiences before scaling up.

Since climate change is a global phenomenon, the government should not bear the sole burden of subsidies. The Economic Relations Division (ERD) and development partners (such as UNDP and WFP) must be involved to secure donor funds for premium subsidies. Furthermore, any new financial support or VAT exemptions for CRI must be carefully harmonised with the government's existing disaster management spending to ensure efficiency, as the state cannot subsidise everything indefinitely. Every district in Bangladesh—ranging from coastal cyclones to northern droughts and river floods—policies must address how insurers will handle policyholders who face multiple disasters in a single year.

Dr M Aslam Alam
Chairman, Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA)

There is a lack of progress at COP30 on climate finance, and fossil fuel phase outs force Bangladesh to abandon hope for external support and rely strictly on its own resources. To facilitate this, the IDRA is actively amending the Insurance Act to provide legal clarity for "parametric insurance," which is currently not covered under existing indemnity-based laws. Additionally, to resolve regulatory duality with the Microcredit Regulatory Authority (MRA), the IDRA proposes a "corporate agent" model. This would allow MFIs and banks to operate under the insurance umbrella with a structured commission system (up to 15%), ensuring a unified regulatory framework.

On the operational front, standardisation and skills development are priorities. The IDRA has signed an MOU with UNDP to develop a regulatory framework for inclusive insurance and is drafting a "Bangladesh Actuary Act" to establish an Actuarial Council. Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) lacks the precision for immediate "prevention," their short-to-medium-term forecasting is sufficient for insurance modelling. However, the most significant hurdles are financial and political. Obtaining government subsidies for insurance premiums is difficult because the state already heavily subsidises agriculture and disaster relief, and the IMF opposes further subsidy expansion. Progress is hindered by political fears that premiums subsidise insurance companies rather than the poor, and the lack of a National Poverty Register creates significant targeting errors.

Md. Norul Amin
Programme Policy Officer – Climate Risk Insurance, UN World Food Programme

UN WFP is supporting climate-vulnerable people to protect their livelihoods from extreme climate events through promoting climate risk insurance tools. First, we must educate communities to build trust and understanding of insurance mechanisms. Second, we need to strengthen the technical capacity of the BMD and the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) to ensure access to quality weather and hydrological data. Finally, effective design and implementation require coordination at both national and regional levels.

Tanjim Ferdous
In Charge, NGOs & Foreign Mission, The Daily Star Moderator

It is clear Bangladesh must move climate risk insurance from experimental pilots to an institutional mainstream—by adopting a dedicated legal framework, offering fiscal incentives and creating a national disaster risk fund to close the affordability gap for vulnerable farmers. We must strengthen actuarial and data capacity, open reinsurance markets, and formally recognise cooperatives and MFIs as distribution partners. IDRA, MoDMR and Finance should take joint ownership so insurance becomes a core pillar of national resilience.

Ultimately, a deep 'crisis of trust' exists, requiring strict governance reforms to ensure claims are settled and public confidence is restored.



Md Sariful Islam
Head of Influencing, Communications, Advocacy & Media (ICAM)
Oxfam in Bangladesh

Oxfam has been working in Bangladesh for over 50 years of frontline experience in Bangladesh, spanning from the 1970 Bhola cyclone to recent urban disasters. Responding to disasters and ensuring climate actions are one of our key working areas. To support the affected communities, CRI plays a crucial role. There should be a unified "one umbrella" approach where the Ministries of Finance and Planning, along with the IDRA, development partners, NGOs, CSOs, the media, and relevant people, must consolidate their resources to tackle climate change and ensure insurance for affected people. The sector has struggled for decades; the time for experimentation is over. We must now force through policies that deliver tangible, immediate protection to climate-impacted populations.



Nafisa Tasnim Khan
Senior Programme Officer, Oxfam in Bangladesh

Risk Insurance cannot operate in isolation; it must be anchored in a wider ecosystem supported by value-added agro-meteorological services, strong linkages with field-level DAE representatives, and robust vulnerability and risk mapping. A climate risk index is essential to determine who should be covered, for which hazards, and to what extent.



Nigar Dil Nahar
Programme Policy Officer, Resilience Innovation, UN World Food Programme

Bangladesh has more than 100 well-designed social safety net programs. However, they are not flexible to respond to sudden shocks. When disasters strike, if the government can inject additional resources through a top-up mechanism, it can provide rapid assistance without creating new administrative structures. This approach transforms safety nets into shock-responsive instruments. WFP is working closely with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), Ministry of Women and Children (MoWCA) and Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW) to institutionalise this flexibility and integrate climate risk insurance and Anticipatory Action.

» Amend the Insurance Act to Legalise Parametric Insurance

Finalise amendments to the Insurance Act to provide legal clarity for "parametric" (index-based) insurance.

» Remove VAT on Climate Insurance Premiums

The government should remove the existing 15% VAT on insurance premiums to lower costs for low-income farmers.

» Implement a "Corporate Agent" Model

A "corporate agent" model allows Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), banks, and digital platforms to sell insurance and earn structured commissions (up to 15%).

» Secure International Funding for Premium Subsidies

Actively collaborate with development partners and global climate funds to secure external financing for premium subsidies.

» Establish a National Poverty Register

A verified National Poverty Register will eliminate subjectivity and corruption in identifying vulnerable households, addressing concerns that subsidies currently benefit insurance companies or non-poor individuals rather than the true victims of climate change.

» Conduct Midterm Evaluations of Existing Pilots

A rigorous midterm evaluation of ongoing initiatives, specifically the "Jamuna River Sustainable Management Project." Policy decisions should be grounded in the micro-level evidence and beneficiary feedback from these 100,000-household pilots.

cyclones, droughts and other hazards, protecting roughly 75,000 vulnerable households nationwide. The pilots have revealed both operational constraints and promising outcomes. WFP is now working with insurance regulators and government ministries to design and test climate insurance products and adapt policies accordingly. We need to translate field evidence into concrete reforms, which include finalising a draft climate insurance guideline and exploring fiscal incentives like VAT waivers and/or premium subsidies. The roundtable participants hope to build consensus on priority actions including possibly forming a multi-stakeholder working group to guide the national scale-up of climate risk insurance.

Md. Jakir Hossain
General Manager
Sudharon Bima Corporation (SBC)
Bangladesh's insurance industry has traditionally sold

Security lapses ahead of polls disturbing

Two bomb-related incidents within 48 hours reveal alarming gaps

We're alarmed by the reported discovery of an explosives cache in a place of learning as well as the killing of a pedestrian in a flyover bomb blast. Both incidents, occurring within a span of 48 hours in Dhaka, have come as warnings that the stability of the pre-election period is far more fragile than the government would like to admit. In South Keraniganj, a madrasa erupted on Friday, injuring two children. When police sifted through the ruins, they unearthed something sinister: four bomb-like objects and 400 litres of chemicals, believed to be hydrogen peroxide, stored in drums.

The key suspect, Al Amin Sheikh, is a man of varied identities: a madrasa director, an Uber driver and, according to police, a figure with a history of terror charges linked to the banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh. That a known crime suspect, previously arrested in 2017 and 2020, could quietly stockpile industrial accelerants in a residential building raises uncomfortable questions about the government's surveillance of extremists. Police suspect the chemicals were intended for "sabotage" ahead of the upcoming elections. Just two days prior to this blast, Siam Majumder, a 21-year-old shop worker, was killed on the New Eskaton Road when a crude bomb was hurled from the Moghbazar Mouchal flyover. As Siam's father asked, "Why do bombs fall on the heads of ordinary people?"

It is a question that resonates uneasily across the capital. The two incidents, though distinct, paint a gloomy picture of the country's security apparatus, just as the hazards are multiplying. On the ground in Keraniganj, a crime den operated under the nose of a landlord who believed she was renting her house to an orphanage. On the flyover, authorities have admitted, a large section of the lights had been turned off, and CCTV cameras were absent.

Meanwhile, police have later confirmed that six individuals have been arrested with ties to the madrasa blast in a widening dragnet. A formal case has now been registered against seven named people—with the absconding suspect, Al Amin Sheikh, at the top of the list—alongside a shadowy cohort of unidentified accomplices.

Whether the danger is stockpiled in the capital's periphery or dropped from a city flyover, such violence suggests that the road to the February elections will be perilous. The government must, therefore, pivot from reactive containment to proactive vigilance. The intelligence failure in Keraniganj about the existence of bombs indicates that the government's gaze is not firmly fixed on public safety threats. Law-enforcement agencies must urgently recalibrate their priorities, ensuring that surveillance tracks criminals on the loose. It is all the more urgent because, ultimately, a successful election rests on the peace of the streets.

Govt must act now to curb air pollution

It's a public health emergency we can no longer ignore

With the arrival of winter, air pollution in Dhaka and across the country has once again reached hazardous levels. On Sunday morning, Dhaka was ranked as the world's third most polluted city, with an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 216. Classified as "very unhealthy," such air poses serious risks to children, the elderly, and people with heart or respiratory diseases. This should set off alarms at the highest levels of the government. Unfortunately, while this is every winter's grim reality, it is met with little to no action from the authorities.

While Dhaka is the hardest hit by air pollution, the rest of the country is also in a bad situation. Even more concerning is that air pollution is no longer just a seasonal problem; it affects us year-round, with Bangladesh ranked as the worst affected country in South Asia, according to a recent World Bank report. The sources of pollution are well known: industrial emissions, brick kilns, outdated vehicles, construction dust, household cooking, agricultural burning, and polluting power plants. Moreover, about 40 percent of Dhaka's pollution is reportedly transboundary.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), air pollution causes an estimated seven million premature deaths worldwide each year, primarily from stroke, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and acute respiratory infections. Numerous studies over the years have shown that air pollution remains a silent, pervasive threat in the country. Yet the government's response remains lacklustre. While some initiatives were taken to shut down illegal brick kilns and promote environment-friendly alternatives, the goals have largely remained unfulfilled. Outdated vehicles continue to operate on city streets, and hundreds of construction sites remain uncovered, contributing heavily to dust pollution.

The impact of these failures is devastating, particularly for children. According to the recent World Bank report, 100 percent of schoolchildren in Dhaka and nearby areas are exposed to unsafe levels of PM2.5, fine particulate matter that penetrates deep into the lungs and bloodstream. Alarmingly, even modest increases in PM2.5 are linked to learning losses equivalent to several weeks of schooling. But Bangladesh still lacks clear, systematic protocols, such as school protection measures or closure guidelines, during episodes of extreme pollution.

Air pollution has become a full-blown public health emergency, and the government must treat it as such. Ensuring access to clean cooking fuels, modernising industries and transport, improving fuel quality, and strictly controlling construction dust are urgent priorities. The government must also take immediate policy measures to protect schoolchildren from toxic air. Clean air is a basic right, and the government must act decisively to protect it.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

US Army conducts Wounded Knee massacre
On this day in 1890, in one of the final chapters of long wars with Native Americans, the US Cavalry killed 146 Lakota Indians at Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota.

EDITORIAL

The interim failed to curb inflation and unemployment



OPEN SKY

Dr Birupaksha Paul is professor of economics at the State University of New York at Cortland in the US.

BIRUPAKSHA PAUL

If the national election does take place in February, a new government will face dire quandaries for the economy, mainly in the lines of inflation and unemployment—the two notorious vices for any economy. As economics textbooks suggest, hitting these two culprits simultaneously is a terrible task because of the typical trade-off between them. As the central bank raises the policy interest rate to tame high inflation, high interest rates, in turn, increased unemployment by discouraging investments. If interest rates are slashed to boost investment and decrease unemployment, the ensuing cheap money will fuel the fire of inflation further up.

This situation is akin to reducing the speed of a car to minimise risks and thus enduring delays in hitting your destination. On the other hand, speeding up will increase the risk of accidents. Bangladesh's current situation with high inflation and rising unemployment is thus quite difficult to solve. Bangladesh Bank has raised policy rate to near 10 percent which has made credit expensive because other banks are charging lending rates at around 15 percent or higher. Private credit growth, which supposed to stay at around 15 percent or higher has now fallen to as low as around six percent—never seen in the last two decades. This puzzling conundrum rarely appears in the economy, heralding the advent of stagflation which Bangladesh's economy never saw in the last quarter century since 2000.

The interim government inherited an inflation of 10.87 percent in August 2024. It was 8.29 percent in November 2025. Achieving this drop in inflation after one and a half years cannot be considered as a big success for the interim government, when it is compared to neighbouring countries' success in inflation control. India's inflation, 6.21 percent in October 2024, fell to below one percent in November 2025, suggesting that price hikes are not a concern at all for India's consumers and investors. Pakistan's inflation, which rose to 38

percent in May 2023, fell below one percent in April 2025. Although it was 6.1 percent in November, it ascertains price normalcy given Pakistan's macro situation. Sri Lanka's inflation was 50 percent in March 2023, but its central bank made it fall so precipitously to 1.3 percent within six months. It was 2.1 percent in November 2025.

Despite achieving credible successes in external sector areas particularly foreign reserves, Bangladesh's central bank failed to display a success story similar to other South Asian central banks. Monetary treatments, including high policy rates above 10 percent, almost failed to tame inflation because of other rogue institutional failures such as extortions, mobocracy, fiscal debility, and declining loan recovery.

That did not happen. Rather, the government's attention was sporadic and thus diluted with regards to economic aspects such as private investment, financial reforms, credit growth, women empowerment, rural opportunities, and above all law and order. According to the General Economic Division's State of the Economy 2025, the overall unemployment situation in 2024 has slightly deteriorated compared to 2023. The highest unemployment rate is 13.54 percent among university graduates as BBS labour force survey reports.

Much to people's disappointment, the trepidation of losing jobs took the centre stage rather than prospects of getting jobs or upliftment in the quality of jobs in the labour market.

More than one lakh garment workers in Bangladesh lost their jobs over the past year following the closure of at least 258 factories, according to a new survey by the Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA).

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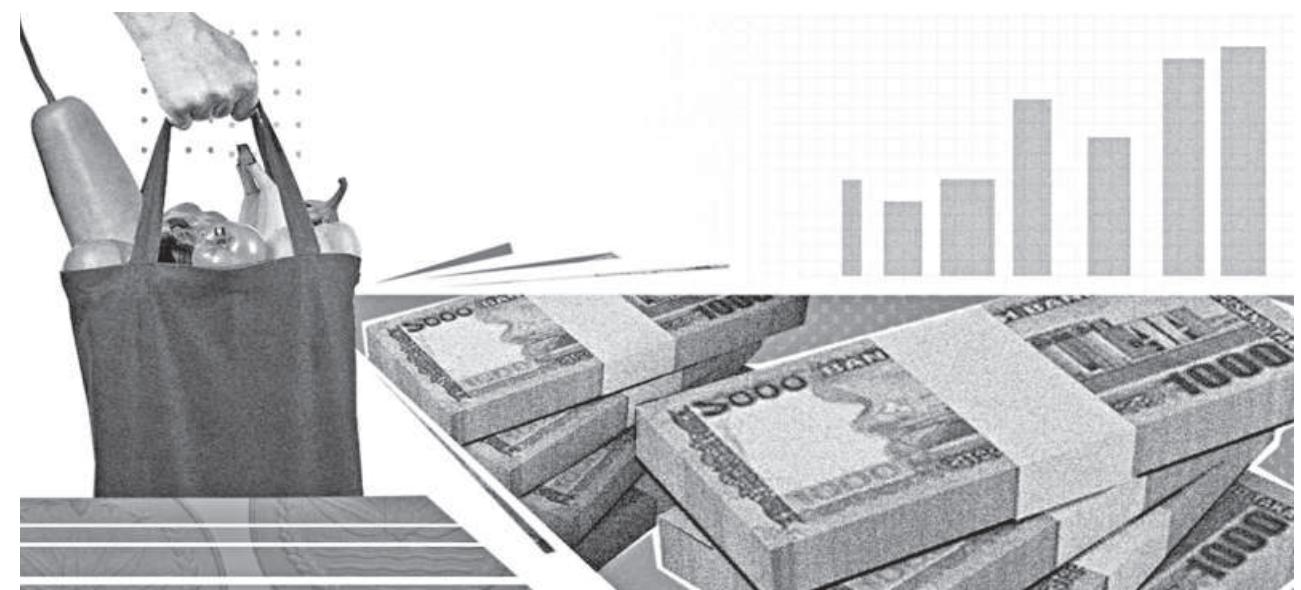
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sector that can generate high growth in both employment and output, and that side has remained excruciatingly disturbed during the interim regime.

The results of industrial perturbation have been manifested in three areas: i) around six percent growth in private credit; ii) an abrupt rise in unemployment; and finally iii) the unholy reversal in the so far declining trend of poverty. Reports say that women job creation has been one of the slowest during the interim regime while it should have been the opposite as a nation strides forward.

It is worth mentioning that the interim government of 2007-2008 primarily focused on law and order without publicising big talks on reforms, and it succeeded in maintaining macroeconomic stability and people's deep sense of security. These two aspects are deeply missing in the current interim regime, making it a prime task for the next government of 2026.

Bangladesh's current growth performance, around four percent in FY2025 and expected five percent in FY2026, is much below its potential. The demographic dividend, which will expire for the nation by 2035, must



FILE VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

Hence, 2025 has been marked by worsening economic conditions which will pose challenges to the new government's economic management capabilities in 2026.

Since unemployment was the triggering factor for the student-led July-August uprising, the interim government's main attention should have flowed into addressing this issue.

The new government must work on how to reverse this inauspicious pattern of factory closures and job losses. While the government is pleased to display significant export growth in FY2025, unrest and panic in the whole garments industry have remained prevalent. Agriculture, being only 11.15 percent of GDP, employs over 40 percent of the workforce, and that is not a good sign. Industry is the only

be utilised quite properly to catch the last train of growth acceleration. Otherwise, it will be Bangladesh's both institutional and structural failures for not translating growth into inclusive development and prosperity. The new government's long-term target will be to rediscover the secrets of decent economic growth which will lower income inequality and regional disparity.

Is the NCP becoming what it once rejected?



ARAFAT RAHMAN

Arafat Rahaman is a journalist at The Daily Star.

The National Citizen Party (NCP) was born with a claim that it would not practise politics as usual. Emerging from the ashes of the July uprising, it asked to be seen as a break from the old habits of convenience and compromise, pledging to distinguish itself through its political language, practice, and a sharper sense of responsibility.

That claim now faces an existential test.

Speculations swirling around a potential Jamaat-NCP alliance finally ended on Sunday afternoon when, at a press conference at the National Press Club, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman officially announced a new electoral front. The NCP, alongside Colonel (Retd) Oli Ahmed's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), has now joined Jamaat's existing coalition—a definitive moment of reckoning for NCP.

A series of developments leading to the formal announcement has turned this coalition into an existential crisis for the party. Earlier, Tasnim Jara, a highly visible leader of NCP, resigned from her post as senior joint secretary to contest the Dhaka-9 constituency as an independent. The crisis then deepened with the resignation of Tajnuva Jabeen, a joint convener, and also a formal letter from 30 central committee members opposing any

political alliance or seat-sharing arrangement with Jamaat.

Seat-sharing is not unusual in Bangladesh's politics. Elections are fought constituency by constituency, and any success depends on organisation, polling agents, and the capacity to protect votes. New parties often struggle because such structures take years to build. From a narrow electoral perspective, alliances can appear practical, even necessary. But the NCP did not enter politics asking to be judged by that standard alone.

Since its inception, NCP presented itself as the political expression. Its leaders spoke against shortcuts, recycled alignments, and moral ambiguity. They promised a new arrangement, repeatedly invoking "noya bondobosto" as a governing principle. That positioning mattered. It is why many young people, first-time participants, and politically unaffiliated citizens placed their trust in the party. The question is: what has changed then?

The official announcement validates the disturbing allegations made by Tajnuva Jabeen in a Facebook post upon her resignation. In it, she argued that the drastic cut in nominations, from 125 to a mere 30-40, was not an emergency measure, but a trap. The timing of Sunday's press conference—just a day before the final nomination

deadline—confirms this view. By stalling the announcement until the eleventh hour, the NCP leadership effectively checkmated their own aspirants. Candidates who spent months campaigning, believing they were part of a nationwide effort to contest all seats, have been abandoned with no time to regroup as independents.

This procedural play is, in many ways, more damaging than the ideological one. As Jabeen pointed out, trust matters more than ideology. Inviting nominations with public fanfare, only to discard grassroots organisers in favour of a deal yielding fewer seats than even smaller Islamist factions are negotiating, signals a deep betrayal. It suggests the "July force" was willing to sacrifice the aspirations of the many to secure safe passage for a select few at the top.

The alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami also carries a weight that goes far beyond seat arithmetic. Jamaat's opposition to independence in 1971, as incompatible with the NCP's values. The letter further accused the prospective partner of engaging in espionage and sabotage within other parties and of conducting character assassination campaigns against the NCP's own female members through online platforms. That such warnings from leaders have been ignored is quite telling about the direction of the party.

Funding adds another layer of complications. The NCP presented itself as a citizen-funded alternative to patronage politics. Crowdfunding is not just a financial mechanism here; it is a political contract. Many contributors donated on the assumption that the party would not compromise with forces they consider historically and morally discredited.

If the party now moves in a direction that violates that understanding, the cost may extend well beyond this election. Warnings came from within the broader July movement as well. Former coordinators like Abdul Kader cautioned that any alliance could damage the future of youth politics.

The NCP claimed to represent a new arrangement. Instead, it has silenced its own aspirants through procedural traps, trading its political promise for short-term expediency. The *shapla koli* has now officially been planted in Jamaat's garden. What will it do next?

party that prided itself on the inclusive spirit of the barricades, the quiet and potentially growing exodus of women leaders represents a serious failure of representation.

The NCP central committee letter also makes it impossible to dismiss the issue as personal dissent. The 30 signatories invoke the party's declared ideology, the historical responsibility of the July uprising, and democratic ethics. They explicitly cite Jamaat's political past, particularly its role in 1971, as incompatible with the NCP's values. The letter further accused the prospective partner of engaging in espionage and sabotage within other parties and of conducting character assassination campaigns against the NCP's own female members through online platforms. That such warnings from leaders have been ignored is quite telling about the direction of the party.

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Bangladesh-India ties: A tragicomedy where populists take centre stage



Professor Shahab Enam Khan is executive director of Bangladesh Center for Indo-Pacific Affairs at Jahangirnagar University, and teaches at the Bangladesh University of Professionals.

SHAHAB ENAM KHAN

There is a tragicomedy in watching two neighbouring countries bound by geography drift apart like two sailors jumping ship in different directions, each convinced the other is sinking faster. This applies to both Bangladesh and India that have apparently decided, one more than the other, that centuries of shared culture, cuisine, and history are insufficient grounds to maintain even basic norms of engagement. What we are witnessing today is not merely a diplomatic crisis. It is a masterclass in how not to conduct foreign policy politically.

At the heart of prevailing tensions lies the narrative of extremism, a trusted old poison that keeps on giving. As Shakespeare would say, "A plague o' both your houses!" Mercutio's dying curse feels uncomfortably apt for what we are witnessing. Two nations seem determined to forgo civility in their relations, while extremists on both sides profit from the carnage. It is a show in which mobs replace politicians, and media and WhatsApp gladiators substitute for statesmen.

In India, saffron extremists and propaganda machines have found Bangladesh to be a convenient punching bag—a replacement for the increasingly inconvenient Pakistan or China cards. The "termites" rhetoric, periodic stray comments on Bangladesh's sovereignty, BJP's Mamata factor, and prime time studio shouting champions have together achieved what decades of politics could not: they have united Bangladeshis across party lines in irritation with Delhi politics.

But let us not pretend that extremism flows only downstream from the Ganges. Bangladesh's interim government today presides over a landscape where the mob culture has become a lived reality, displaying a persistent inability to counter



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

violence effectively. Whether helpless or an accomplice in this episode, the government cannot escape responsibility for the rise of these violent forces. To be fair, post-uprising volatility is hardly unprecedented. But prolonged inaction only emboldens those who thrive on chaos.

India's predicament, on the other hand, is self-inflicted. Having bet heavily on Awami League for so long, Delhi now faces genuine anti-Indian sentiment—not propaganda, just consequences. Meanwhile, India's political and social hysteria since July 2024 continues to feed on narratives repeatedly debunked by objective media, yet the religious card keeps being played. Of course, we cannot deny that minorities face some threats, but so do the

general public.

Delhi's selective amnesia in this regard are almost amusing. It conveniently forgets that the demands of the July 2024 uprising were apolitical and met with state bullets before the eventual ouster of the Awami regime. Saffron politicians might do well to tally their own cards, assuming that they are still capable of moral self-reflection. The absurdity has peaked most recently when Siliguri hoteliers

nothing. And the fourth is a classic: Dhaka, once the BJP's favourite electoral dish, has left the table.

Is blaming Bangladesh fair, then? Let us not forget that Professor Muhammad Yunus had wanted to visit Delhi before Beijing, and has tried to engage politically on various occasions. Delhi's response? Continued disengagement, suggesting a preference for sulking over statesmanship until Bangladesh holds the elections. Diplomacy requires reading the room, but Delhi appears content to wait outside.

This inaction enabled mobs in Delhi's security heartland, Chanakyapuri, to stage an arrogant spectacle against the Bangladesh High Commission, following similar incidents in Agartala and Kolkata. High Commissioner Riaz Hamidullah's professional response to denial of mob activities by his counterparts deserves to be studied in diplomatic academies, as do the political failures that made such scenes possible in the first place. Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma, it should be acknowledged, also showed professionalism, refraining from publicly sensationalising diplomatic summons.

Yes, some protesters attempted to march towards Indian diplomatic missions in Bangladesh. There have been regrettable incidents of stone-pelting as well. But the Indian response came from the same crowd peddling Akhand Bharat, while periodically questioning Bangladesh's sovereignty. Sanity has, however, prevailed for now. Both governments have taken steps to prevent further escalation and to protect diplomatic premises. The question worth asking is this: what did those who mobilised mobs against diplomatic missions expect to achieve?

Indians must accept the reality that they will have to maintain even-handed relations with Bangladesh regardless of which party governs in Dhaka. Bangladeshis, for their part, must accept that India cannot, and will not, de-securitise its relationship with its eastern neighbour given its national security compulsions. But there lies a political lesson, too. Delhi, having lectured Bangladesh on extremism for years, now finds itself courting the Taliban. When your diplomatic dance card includes the very extremists that your own rhetoric previously vilified, your moral

high ground starts to look suspiciously like quicksand.

Meanwhile, Beijing and Washington watch from the balcony as two key partners in their respective Asian strategies squabble over the last samosa while the restaurant burns. Both know this antagonism serves neither their interests nor regional stability. They might have found it entertaining had geopolitics not chosen this precise moment to redraw the geopolitical map.

What, then, must be done?

Bangladesh must ensure its domestic security ahead of the 2026 elections, which will determine its future stability. The armed forces, bureaucracy, and political parties must forge an immediate consensus to maintain order and neutralise extremism, wherever it originates. Bangladesh should remain open to normalisation with Delhi. Reciprocity, naturally, is non-negotiable.

India, meanwhile, should seriously consider whether its current approach serves any purpose beyond feeding nationalist television. Minority persecution in India, documented year after year in international religious freedom reports, has not gone unnoticed, while restricting people-to-people contact has only proved counterproductive. Walls may make headlines, but bridges make progress. For Delhi, the homework is simple: It has to understand where Dhaka's red lines on sovereignty, autonomy, and foreign policy now stand.

Both nations face a more or less similar reality on the ground. Crises continue to pile up while populists promote their own versions of the Crime Master Gogo, the hilariously delusional villain from Bollywood's cult classic *Andaz Apna Apna*, convinced of his immense power while the world laughs. The time has come for veteran politicians to decide whether to continue this tragicomedy or accept that geography is destiny, and as such must be managed through restraint and reciprocity—not out of affection, but rather cold pragmatism.

I remain optimistic that politicians and diplomats will eventually stumble upon pragmatism at some point. Until then, someone should tell the spokespersons, partisan hype merchants, and assorted Crime Master Gogos that they are not helping. At all.

A newspaper, a nation, and the ashes of memory



Dr Md Mahmudul Hasan is professor of English language and literature at International Islamic University Malaysia. He can be reached at mmhasan@iium.edu.my.

MD MAHMUDUL HASAN

The *Daily Star* has been one of my favourite newspapers since the 1990s. It has become one of my staple sources of information about current events. I have followed how news stories and opinion pieces in *The Daily Star* in the later years of Hasina's misrule exposed her autocracy and chronicled the July 2024 movement.

In 2015, Sheikh Hasina sought to financially throttle the newspaper by making industries stop advertising in it. Ironically, the same English daily came under attack in the post-Hasina era. This happened while we were mourning the death of one of the most prominent leaders of the July uprising.

Many foreign diplomats in Dhaka and beyond rely largely on *The Daily Star* for updates on events in Bangladesh. We should also bear in mind that the newspaper not only provides information about the country's socio-economic and political situation but also documents and promotes our literary and cultural artefacts. It not only informs us about national and international affairs but also, through its literature and culture pages, helps preserve our traditions.

Besides, it has developed a strong digital archive which will help communicate our cultural legacy to future generations. The arsonists destroyed its archive, which contains print copies since 1991 and will be difficult to retrieve. This is a loss not only for the newspaper but also for the whole nation. While *The Daily Star* may eventually restore its operations, the nation's cultural loss—specifically the destruction of our collective history—far outweighs the newspaper's financial damages.

With dogged determination, sharp insight



The *Daily Star* contributed to exposing Hasina's tyranny and corruption, and thus helped create global awareness of what was going on in Bangladesh. FILE PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

and hard work for decades, *The Daily Star* has been established as a media outlet that commands an international reputation and readership. As Bangladesh's leading English daily, it also represents our country internationally. In that sense, it is our bridge and mouthpiece to a global audience, and the attack on it was an attempt to stifle our voice to the world.

The English daily contributed to exposing Hasina's tyranny and corruption, and thus

helped create global awareness of what was going on in Bangladesh. For instance, its report titled "S Alam's Aladdin's lamp," published in August 2023, considerably shook the foundation of the Hasina regime. The daily's coverage of the July 2024 uprising gave the movement intellectual support.

I am personally grateful that on August 4, 2024—the day before Hasina fell and fled—*The Daily Star* ran my essay "Violence against students: A tribute to our little

John Hampdens," where I denounced the "gruesome and unbearable shoot-to-kill" strategy of the Hasina government that resulted in the "mass slaughter of students." The essay also celebrated the bravery of our young July 2024 heroes and heroines.

Moreover, in the aftermath of the uprising, the English daily brought out *The Great Wave*, where authors regard the movement as an "explosion of a united democratic desire among people of all classes and professions" (p. 140). These and hundreds of other instances make the newspaper pro-Bangladeshi, not pro-any foreign country.

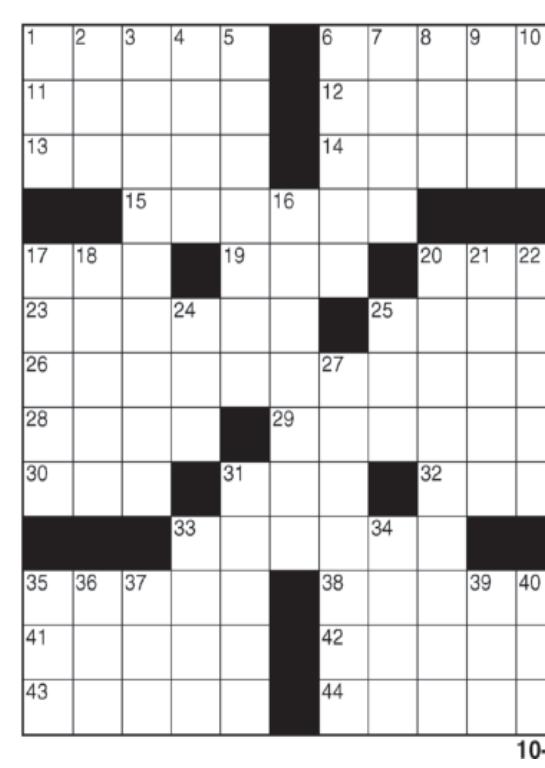
If some people believe that the English daily has not done enough or right, they can contest its journalism cerebrally, through constructing alternative narratives, not by attacking and vandalising its office and pillaging its property.

We all want a competitive media environment that will foster intellectual curiosity and scholarly conversations and ultimately benefit our country. However, that requires knowledge, expertise, professionalism, diligence, a sense of commitment, leadership and teamwork skills. The arsonists who attacked media houses and those who support them are obviously incapable of challenging free media intellectually. It is their dismal incompetence and intellectual bankruptcy that instigated them to resort to violence.

The Daily Star, *Prothom Alo* and other competitive media organisations are our national treasures. I challenge the detractors to establish a comparable daily in competition.

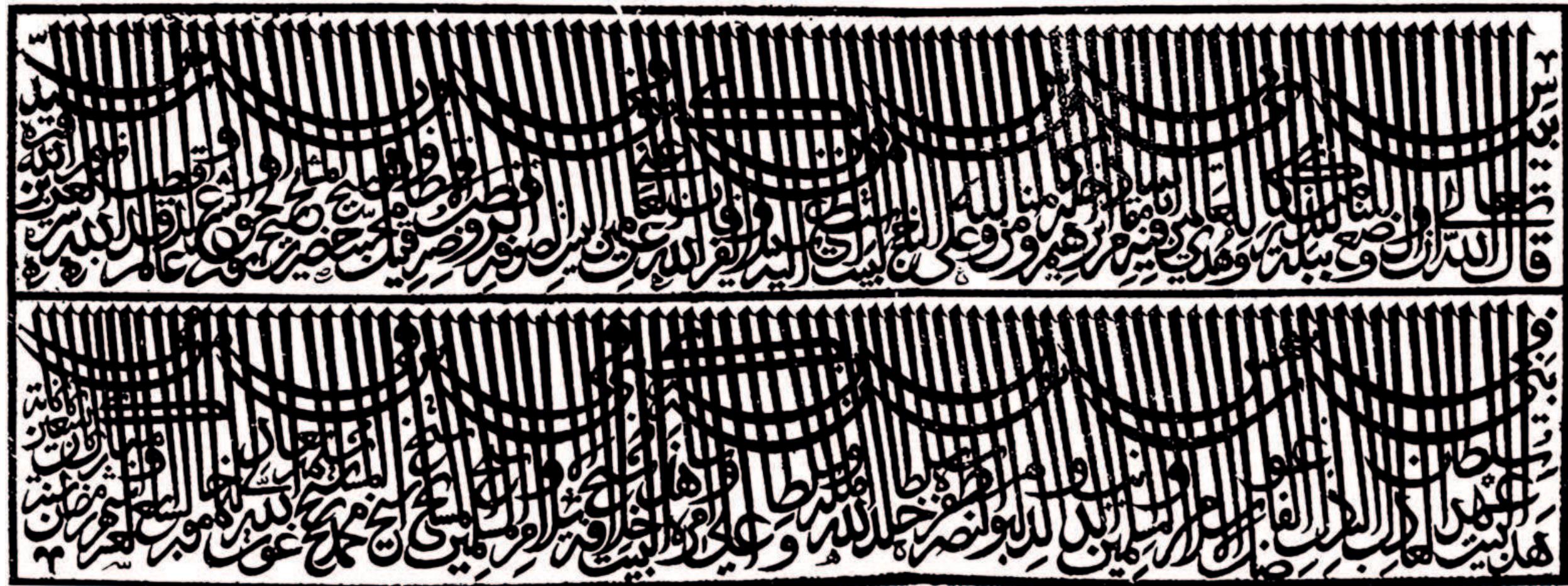
ACROSS
1 Wine barrels
6 Form
11 Little hooter
12 West Point student
13 Plow pioneer John
14 UV stopper
15 Make possible
17 Music booster
19 Fuming
20 Relaxing resort
23 Fresh face, say
25 Action star
Jackie
26 Tiring climb
28 Vaccine type
29 Fall back
30 Neither follower
31 Torment
32 Spot to jot

33 Like some arguments
35 Writer P.D.
38 Take as one's own
41 Up in the air
42 Chad neighbor
43 Prison problems
44 Irritable
DOWN
1 Atlantic catch
2 Stunned wonder
3 PJs, say
4 "Showboat" composer
5 Fill with mist
6 Bawl out
7 Visibility lessener
8 Fuss
9 Signing need
10 Hot time in Paris
16 Home to many



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

R	O	S	I	N	F	L	I	P
A	P	P	L	E	F	I	O	N
S	H	A	L	E	I	N	C	U
P	E	N	S	P	L	E	A	S
E	L	I	T	T	M	L	E	D
D	I	S	T	R	E	S	S	
A	H	O	Y	E	I	R	E	
M	I	S	T	R	E	S	S	
D	A	D	N	U	S	A	C	E
O	R	A	N	G	E	P	L	A
R	O	M	E	O	K	A	P	P
I	M	E	A	N	E	G	R	E
C	A	S	T					



An Arabic inscription dated 898 (1493) in Bengali tughra calligraphy, with representations of the swan and reeds of riverine rural Bengal.

UNITY WITHIN DIVERSITY

A journey through Bangladesh's Islamic inscriptions

The fabulous Arabic inscription of Nim Darwaza, which I (the author) discovered in a mosque in Mahdipur village in the vicinity of the medieval Bengal capital Gaur, is one of the most exquisite inscriptions in the world. This inscription, as well as the Chand Darwaza Arabic inscription, once decorated two monumental entrances of the sultanate palace in Gaur.

MOHAMMAD YUSUF SIDDIQ

Architectural inscriptions are a fascinating aspect of our cultural heritage because of their rich and diverse historical content and artistic merit. Arabic and Persian inscriptions of Bengal help us understand the advent of Islam in the region, which eventually made Bengali Muslims the second largest linguistic group in the Islamic world.

That the science of epigraphy in the world of Islam started at the hands of Jamaluddin Shibi, an early fifteenth-century academic and scholar at the famous Bengali Seminary in Makkah, is one among many remarkable historical revelations in the field. His study illustrated superbly how wonderfully these fascinating inscriptions help us in finding the missing links in the cultural continuity of the old world, which eventually resulted in the "globalisation of the medieval world of Islam".

The tradition of inscribing Arabic and Persian on stone in

to his country home in England.

Inscriptions serve as a missing link to the past, offering many historical clues otherwise unavailable elsewhere. Arabic and Persian inscriptions form a significant element of Islamic architectural decoration due to their aesthetic appeal. They are rich in textual content, artistic manifestation, and diversity of form. They shed fresh light on the cultural dynamics of a crucial period of history and help us understand the complex religious transformation process in the region. These epigraphic evidences suggest religious harmony, cultural continuity, and mutual understanding among peoples of various identities in Sultanate Bengal.

Titles in Islamic inscriptions portray the worldly ambition for power and glory of the ruling class, albeit over-toned with religious fervour, often turning into what might today be termed "politically correct" or "euphemistic expressions". The high standards displayed in the literary style of these

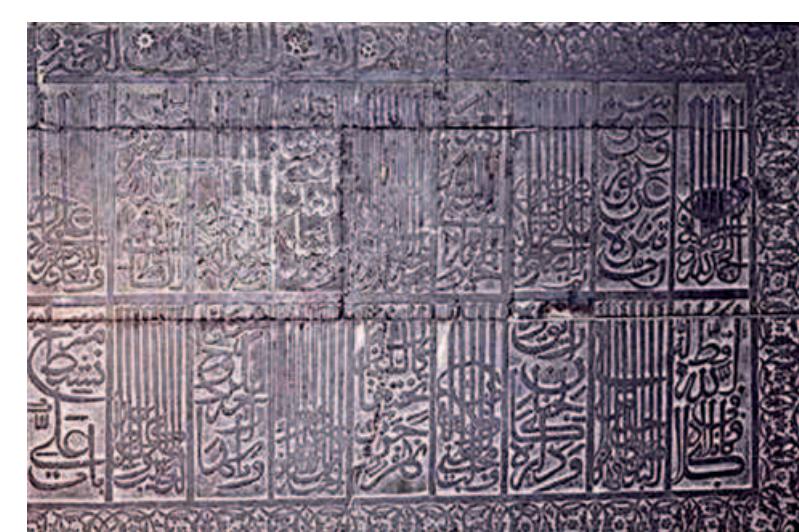


A Persian inscription in the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi.

Bengal started with a Persian inscription of the third Muslim ruler, Sultan 'Ala' Din ('Ali Mardan) Khalji, immediately after the conquest of Bengal in the early thirteenth century. This, as well as another superb Persian inscription of another early Khalji ruler of Bengal — Balka Khan Khalji (626-628 A.H./1229-1230 C.E.) — indicates that the Persian language was patronised by the ruling Muslim elite from the very beginning.

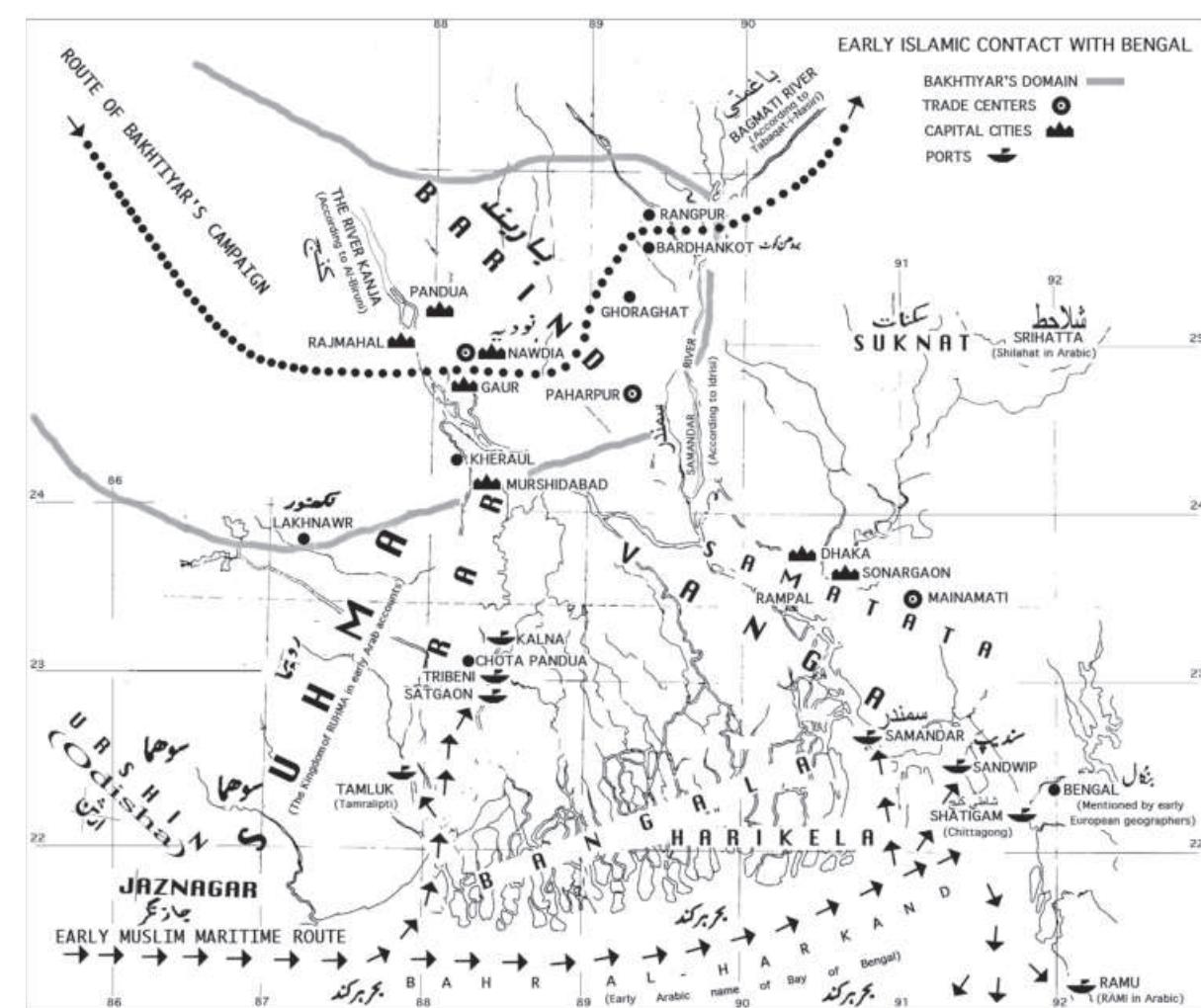
The fabulous Arabic inscription of Nim Darwaza, which I (the author) discovered in a mosque in Mahdipur village in the vicinity of the medieval Bengal capital Gaur, is one of the most exquisite inscriptions in the world. This inscription, as well as the Chand Darwaza Arabic inscription, once decorated two monumental entrances of the sultanate palace in Gaur. Unfortunately, during the colonial period, European antique collectors transferred many inscriptions to their homelands.

Colonel Franklin, to cite one example, moved quite a few Arabic inscriptions — including the Chand Darwaza inscription — from Bengal



Alternating Tughra and monumental thulth calligraphic styles in the Chand Darwaza inscription at Mianahdar, in the royal garden of the Badshahi Palace in Gaur, dated 871 A.H./1466-67 C.E.

epigraphic texts, their aesthetic exuberance, and their calligraphic refinement remind us of cultural continuity across different regions — a phenomenon that may be described as the "globalisation of the old world".



Early Islamic contact with Bengal.

Interreligious relations are an important lens through which to understand the history and culture of the Bengal Sultanate. One reason Muslim dynasties lasted for such a long time, compared with many earlier dynasties such as the Pala and the Sena, was that Muslim rulers, in general, adopted a moderate approach to interreligious relations. Indeed, they were far more tolerant than they are usually given credit for. None of the inscriptions record any wilful destruction of religious

Khan Jahan Rahmat Khan, built a mosque in Sylhet in 868 A.H./1464 C.E. These epigraphic evidences indicate religious harmony, cultural continuity, and mutual understanding among peoples of various identities in that period.

Epigraphic evidence suggests that Islam gradually assimilated into Bengali life harmoniously and became part of the land's natural experience — more as a new civilisation that refreshed the region with cultural dynamism than as merely a set of ritualistic tenets. Islam thus emerged as a social system well suited to the common people of rural Bengal. It rapidly became a popular way of life in the ever-growing Bengali villages, as human settlement expanded along the delta, alongside the spread of rice cultivation and the clearing of forested marshland.

Bengal's remarkable ecological balance and natural harmony are represented in a number of inscriptions, albeit in abstract forms, as reflected in the Babargram inscription (dated 905 A.H./1500 C.E.). Bengali Islam was accommodating enough to welcome semi-Hinduised tribes, nomads, and various other local groups into a new civilisational sphere, to the extent that non-Muslims were free to visit mosques — as depicted in the earliest Arabic manuscript of Bengal, *Hawd al-Hayat* — as well as khanqahs and madrasas.

In an era when the communication revolution is gradually turning the earth into a global village, it is very important for us to understand the diverse and complex world

of Islam, which represents more than one-fifth (nearly 23%) of the human population. A tremendous transformation is taking place almost everywhere in the lives, societies, and political systems of these vast populations. These rapid changes are especially visible in the eastern parts of South Asia.

The resurgence of Islamic norms and values among Muslims makes it even more important that we understand the history, religion, and culture of the Islamic world in their proper context and in greater depth. Fortunately, the inscriptions of Bengal have much to offer in helping us understand historical Islam.

A well-known French colonial administrator in North Africa once compared the world of Islam to a resonant box: the faintest sound in one corner reverberates throughout the whole.

As elsewhere in the Islamic world, this apt metaphor also finds expression in Bengal, a significant part of which constitutes present-day Bangladesh, the third most populous Muslim country in the world. Thus, despite their many distinctive local cultural features, one soon discovers in these remarkable epigraphic treasures a vibrant message — unity within diversity — that is deeply rooted in the pluralistic Bengali culture of this eastern region of South Asia, as much as in the broader Islamic culture in both historical and global contexts.

Prof Dr Mohammad Yusuf Siddiq is a renowned expert in Islamic history and epigraphy. He can be contacted at siddiq.mohammad@gmail.com.

A league in a hurry

WFL returns today

SPORTS REPORTER

The much-awaited Bangladesh Women's Football League [WFL] kicks off on Monday with 11 teams, but serious doubts persist over whether the competition will provide any meaningful sporting value amid uneven team formation, logistical shortcomings and the absence of commercial backing.

Bangladesh Police take on Bangladesh Army in the opening match before defending champions Nasrin Academy face BKSP at the Birsreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur – the league's sole venue.

Organised after a gap of one and a half years, the league appears hurried and procedural, raising concerns that it is being staged largely to satisfy Asian Football Confederation (AFC) requirements rather than to nurture competitive women's football. AFC statutes demand a minimum of 10 matches per team, a condition the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has met by enrolling exactly 11 teams in a single-leg round-robin format.



As many as 55 matches will be crammed into just 33 days, with up to five matches scheduled on most match days. Limited floodlight facilities, the lack of alternative venues and an intense match calendar threaten to compromise player welfare and match quality.

In an effort to create balance, the BFF placed 36 players in a central pool, allowing clubs to sign five senior players from Pot-1, five age-group players from Pot-2 and one goalkeeper from Pot-3. However, the results have been starkly uneven.

Newcomers Rajshahi Stars, bankrolled by Nabil Group, have assembled a formidable squad featuring 11 national team players, while Farashganj have recruited six. In contrast, five teams will compete without a single national team player, relying largely on academy footballers or personnel from services teams.

Defending champions Nasrin Academy have also been hit by the imbalance. Club owner Nasrin Begum said she was able to sign only one age-group national team player, highlighting the financial constraints faced by most teams.

"Funding and sponsorship are the main issues. Most clubs are depending on academy players because there is no financial support," she said.

The league itself does not have a title sponsor.

Foreign participation is equally limited. Although each team is allowed to sign four overseas players and field two in a match, only Farashganj have recruited two Nepalese footballers, while Nasrin Academy are trying to rope in one Australian-Bangladeshi player.

The scheduling also mirrors earlier contradictions in planning. National team coach Peter Butler had previously criticised the decision to allow players to compete in the Bhutan Women's League, warning that a lack of competitive fixtures would harm fitness and sharpness. His concerns appeared justified after heavy national team defeats against Thailand and during last month's Tri-Nation series. Similar risks now loom over a league squeezed into a short window with minimal recovery time.

BFF women's wing chairman Mahfuzza Akter Kiron acknowledged the organisational challenges.

"Organising multiple matches on a single day is definitely challenging. However, we have to finish the league within one month, so we don't have any alternatives," she said, citing limitations in floodlights and facilities.

She also confirmed a lack of interest from established clubs.

"We sent invitation letters to everyone. Ataur Rahman Bhuiyan Academy did not submit an entry. Abahani said they would form a team next year."

Adding to the sense of disarray, the BFF failed to provide a complete list of team registrations less than 24 hours before the league's opening day.

KHALID HOSSAIN

It would be easy to begin with clichés: underdogs, fairy tales, David and Goliath. However, the story of Bangladesh women's football in 2025 refuses the comfort of familiar labels.

It began with whispers that became shouts, with footsteps that hesitated, with hearts that doubted. It ended with a quiet rewriting of history, the kind that does not announce itself loudly, but lingers.

Context matters. The men's national team have qualified for Asia's premier competition just once – back in 1979, a moment preserved like an old photograph. The women this year went further than any Bangladesh side had managed in nearly half a century. They qualified for the AFC Women's Asian Cup for the first time, doing so as the lowest-ranked team (128) ever to enter the tournament. Rankings – which rose to a record 24 spots afterwards – like expectations, were politely ignored.

The year began in turbulence. February brought revolt. Senior players, led by Sabina Khatun, publicly called for the removal of head coach Peter Butler, citing grievances over favouritism, tone, and trust. The dispute unfolded not in hushed corridors but in full



public view, with press conferences as tense as any monsoon-soaked district cup final. The team that had delivered back-to-back SAFF titles seemed to unravel in real time.

Butler remained unmoved, though, like a lighthouse amid storm and flood. The federation chose continuity. Contracts were honoured, compromises reached, and the noise gradually receded. However, some familiar faces did not return, leaving an unmistakable reminder that every rebellion carries its casualties.

What followed was a quiet revolution as the English coach continued to trust youth, demand discipline, and insist on a game that thought before it ran. May-June's friendly draws against superior-ranked Indonesia and Jordan offered clues for what was in store.

In July, in Myanmar, the lessons were tested. Victories over Bahrain and Turkmenistan came with assurance, but in the decisive match against the hosts, Ritu Porna Chakma appeared as though conjured by the spirits of the riverbanks. She scored

twice, with the lightness of a dancer and the precision of a hunter. Bangladesh qualified and did it with style: tactically sophisticated, emotionally resonant, and quietly audacious.

Ritu Porna's year came to symbolise the shift. Both Ritu Porna and the national women's team were rewarded with two of the nation's highest civilian honours, with the forward earning the Rokeya Padak and the team being awarded the Ekushey Padak.

More subtly, the team's thoughtful playing style began to change language itself. They were spoken of less as "women footballers" and more simply as footballers, practitioners of a shared craft.

The momentum ran deeper. The U-20 side lifted the SAFF Championship at home and qualified for their Asian finals, like their seniors. The U-17s, even in defeat, added their notes to a swelling chorus.

Success brought attention, sometimes in unexpected forms. A men's youth team coach admitted on record that the women's achievements were putting pressure on the men – an unintended but telling compliment.

Yet setbacks remained. While Bangladesh played more international matches than in any recent year, straight losses to Thailand, Malaysia, and Azerbaijan underlined the distance still to be travelled before next year's

main event in Australia. Domestic structures lagged behind ambition, pushing players to seek minutes abroad, in Bhutan or on futsal courts. Eventually, the Women's Football League saw daylight – starting on December 29 after nearly a one-and-a-half-year gap.

Butler spoke openly of the need to rise beyond South Asia, a standard he described as "terrible", and towards Asia proper. It was clear that this team had stopped measuring themselves against neighbours, setting their sights on what was previously out of reach – like the Olympics and the World Cup.

The reception after qualification captured the paradox. There was pride, yes, but also insistence. Captain Afeida Khandokar spoke of the need for much better nutrition, facilities, and preparation. It was the language of a team that had outgrown novelty and begun to negotiate with the future.

2025 began in rebellion. It ended in belief. Amid limited facilities and modest coverage, Bangladeshi women's football became the country's most successful national team of the year. They proved that progress does not always arrive with trumpets. Sometimes it comes quietly, like water finding its way through stone, reshaping the landscape without asking permission.

Will Emon's 'courageous' move to No. 4 work in the long run?

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Parvez Hossain Emon has batted mostly as an opener in Bangladesh's T20I side, but with an opener-heavy top order at the moment, Emon could be seen at a new position in the upcoming T20 World Cup.

Sylhet Titans have handed him the number-four role in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), and the 23-year-old made an immediate impact in his two outings so far. However, whether his natural instincts align with the position going forward remains a question.

In his first match for Sylhet, Emon struck an unbeaten 65 off 33 balls. His changed role saw him come to the crease in the ninth over against a softer ball, not always a comfortable prospect for an opener. However, the way he adapted – batting in the daytime with the ball gripping the surface and then adjusting again

Warriors that, with the World Cup approaching, Emon was being "given an opportunity" to bat at four for the franchise.

Out of his 30 T20Is for Bangladesh, Emon has opened the innings 28 times. His only T20I appearance at number four came in the final match of the last series against Ireland. With Tanzid Tamim and Saif Hassan also in the opening mix, there was discussion about utilising openers in different roles, which was reflected in that final game.

"We had a plan that since he [Emon] can bat at four, if Saif Hassan opens, he will be able to bat at four easily because I thought Saif wasn't that comfortable at four," selector Hasibul Hossain Shanto told The Daily Star yesterday.

Hasibul also said that he had spoken to Emon about the number-four role he is currently playing for his franchise.

"Everyone is seeing it [his comfort at four]. I told Parvez, 'Look, you are scoring runs in T20s



Brac Bank Aparajeyo Alo Women's Hockey Tournament continues in full swing as two matches took place at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium in Dhaka on Sunday. Zone 2 (Dhaka & Mymensingh) faced Zone 4 (Chattogram & Sylhet), while Zone 1 (Rajshahi & Rangpur) squared off against Zone 3 (Khulna & Barishal). A total of five zones are playing in the final round of the competition. With BKSP being regarded as a single zone, the four other zones feature two divisions each. The tournament will conclude on December 31.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



A LOOK BACK AT 2025

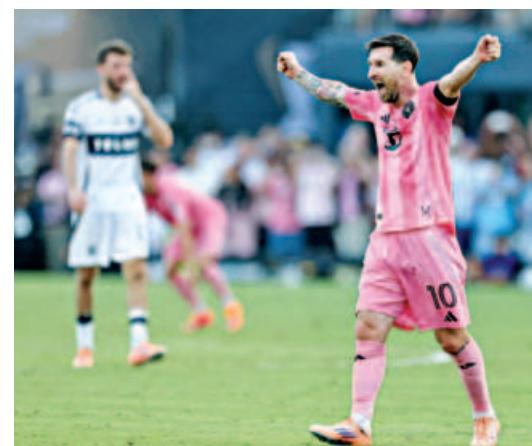
Miles apart, yet redefining football

The year 2025 unfolded like an epilogue written by destiny itself – one more chapter where football refused to let its greatest rivalry fade quietly into history. Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, the two superstars who defined a generation, spent the year thousands of miles apart, in different leagues, cultures, and systems. Yet, once again, they ended the year doing what they have always done best: winning, inspiring, and redefining what longevity looks like at the very top of sport.

Messi starred for Inter Miami, winning the MLS Golden Boot and was named MLS MVP for the second straight year. The Argentine superstar helped Miami win their first MLS Cup, earning MLS Cup MVP with two assists in the final. Across all competitions in the calendar year he totaled 46 goals and 28 assists in 54 appearances.

Ronaldo, at 40, continued to score prolifically for Al-Nassr and Portugal, finishing the year with 38 goals and 4 assists in 44 appearances, including key strikes as Portugal won the UEFA Nations League, and remained a dominant scoring force in the Saudi Pro League.

**Read full story on The Daily Star website



under lights in Sylhet's next match -- was viewed positively.

"When you start something, you don't get comfortable immediately," BCB chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu told The Daily Star on Sunday when asked about Emon.

"Especially batting during the day and at night, there is a difference in application, and being able to adapt was good. I am happy that he showed the courage to sacrifice his own position and bat elsewhere," Lipu added.

After his fifty-plus knock in the first game, Emon said he was ready for any role, explaining that batting at number four allows him to "test and prove" himself, even though opening the innings is where he is "most comfortable".

Sylhet captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz suggested after the opening match against Rajshahi

at four, and he agreed. He will play at four, and if he is successful, he won't need to go back to opening," Hasibul said.

However, Hasibul insisted that the national selectors did not ask Sylhet Titans to play Emon at number four, although he mentioned that "maybe someone from the board did". He also made it clear that the role is not set in stone for the batter.

Emon's ability to adapt could see him continue at number four, depending on how many innings he gets there for Sylhet. Whether he develops the softer hands required to negotiate spin in the middle overs may define his success both in the BPL and in upcoming events, but whether this adaptation takes something away from his natural game remains to be seen.

A year long yearned for

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HADI MURDER Charge sheet within 10 days Says home adviser; cops admit suspects fled to India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators expect to submit the charge sheet in the murder case of Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, a frontline fighter of the July uprising, within the next 10 days, likely by January 7, Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said yesterday.

Speaking to reporters after a law and order core committee meeting at the Secretariat, the adviser said the probe is now in its final stage.

He noted that progress has been made based on information obtained from arrestees, witness statements, and a comprehensive assessment of recovered evidence.

"The interim government is determined to ensure justice," the adviser said, adding that police, BGB, Rab, and other intelligence agencies

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Six on remand over Keraniganj madrasa blast

Police claim suspects are supporters of banned JMJB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested six people and filed a case over the recovery of chemicals, explosives, and bomb-making materials from Ummal Qura International Madrasa in Keraniganj following an explosion there on Friday morning.

The prime accused, Sheikh Al Amin, 32, a director of the madrasa who was previously arrested on terror charges, is still at large.

Sub-Inspector Rafiqul Islam of South Keraniganj Police Station filed the case under the Anti-Terrorism Act against seven named individuals. Six to seven unidentified persons were also accused.

Besides Al Amin, the others named in the case are Shahin, alias Abu Bakar, alias Musa, alias Diba Sultan, 32; Amirin, alias Darji Amin, 50; Shafiar Rahman Fakir, 36; Asiya Begum, 28; Yasmin Akter, 21; and Asmani Khatun, alias Asma, 32.

All six were arrested from different parts of the capital and other areas between Friday and yesterday.

The explosion occurred at the madrasa in the Hasnabad Housing area around 10:25am on Friday, causing severe damage to the madrasa building and nearby establishments.

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পূর্বাচল
প্রবাসী পল্লী
প্রবাসী (NRB) ও বন্দেশীদের বিনিয়োগে বাংলাদেশের সুব্রহ্ম আবাসন প্রকল্প
● রাজউক পূর্বাচল ৩০০ ফিট রাস্তার শেষ প্রান্তে ● জাহিকা অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চলের বিপরীতে

প্রবাসী পল্লী এন্ড
প্রবাসী ও বন্দেশীদের জন্যে
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**আতশবাজী পোড়ানো গ্রামহানির কারণ হতে পারে
নববর্ষ উপলক্ষে আতশবাজী পোড়ানো থেকে বিরত থাকুন
শব্দন্ধন (নিয়ন্ত্রণ) বিধিমালা, ২০২৫ মেনে চলুন**
দেশজুড়ে জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন ও পরিবেশ দূষণ বিষয়ক সচেতনতামূলক প্রচারাভিযান প্রকল্প
পরিবেশ, বন ও জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন মন্ত্রণালয়



Dhaka rejects Delhi's remarks on minorities

STAR REPORT

Dhaka has rejected the recent remarks made by the spokesperson of India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) regarding the situation of minority communities in Bangladesh.

At the same time, the Bangladesh government urged various quarters in India to refrain from spreading misleading narratives on minority issues.

On Friday, MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "The unremitting hostility against minorities in Bangladesh, including Hindus, Christians and Buddhists at the hands of extremists, is a matter of grave concern.

"Over 2,900 incidents of violence against minorities, including cases of killings, arsons, and land grabs, have been documented by independent sources during the tenure of the interim government. These incidents

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2

Brigitte Bardot dies at 91

AFP, Paris



French movie star and animal rights activist Brigitte Bardot has died at age 91, her foundation said yesterday.

She died in her Saint-Tropez home, La Madrague, on the French Riviera.

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Inqilab Moncho vows to continue movement

Its blockade halts traffic in cities

STAR REPORT

Leaders and activists of Inqilab Moncho blocked the Shahbagh intersection in Dhaka yesterday afternoon as part of their "all-out blockade" programme in divisional cities, including Chattogram, Cumilla, Barishal, Rajshahi, Khulna, and Sylhet, demanding justice for slain leader Sharif Osman Bin Hadi.

The blockade at Shahbagh began at 2:00pm. However, by around 11:00am, a number of protesters already took positions on adjacent roads, chanting slogans seeking justice for Hadi.

The protesters occupied the Shahbagh intersection from Friday and continued their sit-in overnight amid the cold weather.

They left the area early yesterday after Abdullah Al Jaber, member secretary of the platform, announced an expanded blockade programme in divisional cities.

Demonstrators returned ahead of the scheduled time to take part in yesterday's programme. They said they would continue their protest until justice is ensured.

"Statements from the administration are nothing but eyewash. They are trying to buy time. The

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2



Leaders and activists of Inqilab Moncho blocked the Shahbagh intersection for the third consecutive day yesterday, demanding justice for slain leader Sharif Osman Bin Hadi.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Dense fog hampers river, road transport Mercury to dip further, says met office

STAR REPORT

River and road communications in different parts of the country were severely disrupted due to dense fog amid the ongoing cold spell yesterday. Nikli upazila in Kishoreganj recorded 9.8 degrees Celsius yesterday, the lowest temperature of the season so far, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

"The temperature will drop further in the next few days," said Aktaruzzaman Faruk, an official of the Met Office. A BMD bulletin issued at 9:00am yesterday said moderate to thick fog may occur at places across the country from Monday midnight till morning and may continue until noon.

"Air navigation, inland river transport and road communication may be temporarily disrupted due to thick fog," it added.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) directed the suspension of waterway transport operations yesterday evening.

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