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Seat-sharing knot tightens for Jamaat, IAB

Inclusion of NCP in alliance further complicates calculation

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and MAMUNUR RASHID

The daunting task of striking a seat-sharing deal has grown increasingly complicated for Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Andolan Bangladesh with the two parties fielding candidates in more than 240 overlapping constituencies.

Jamaat and IAB -- two of the largest Islamist groups in the country -- had been in talks for over three months to consolidate Islamist votes under an alliance of eight mostly Islamist parties.

Despite prolonged discussions, the talks collapsed just short of the December 29 nomination deadline, leading both parties to submit nominations in hundreds of seats and deepening uncertainty within the newly announced alliance.

Election Commission data show that Jamaat filed nominations in 276 constituencies on the final day, while Islami Andolan submitted papers in 268 seats.

An analysis of the nominations reveals that Jamaat and IAB candidates are set to compete directly in at least 240 constituencies across the country, often in seats where senior leaders themselves are contesting.

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Swechchhasebak Dal leader shot dead in Dhaka

Another man bullet-hit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified assailants shot dead former Swechchhasebak Dal leader Azizur Rahman Musabbir and injured another man in the city last night.

Musabbir, who served as the general secretary of Dhaka City North Swechchhasebak Dal, the volunteer wing of the BNP, was shot near the Super Star Hotel in Dhaka's Karwan Bazar around 8:30pm.

He was rushed to BRB Hospital on Panthapath but was pronounced dead on arrival, Fazlul Karim, additional deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Tejgaon Zone), told The Daily Star.

The injured, Sufian Byapari Masud, is the general secretary of the Tejgaon Thana Van Workers' Union.

Party members said Musabbir attended a programme with a group of Shariatpur residents at the Super Star Hotel in the evening.

After the event, Musabbir and Masud were walking down a lane nearby when two men opened fire. The attackers fled the scene on foot, said police.

Following the incident, a group of people including local BNP men staged protests near the Sonargaon intersection.

Family members and party activists said Musabbir spent much of his time in jail during the Awami League regime and was repeatedly arrested in a number of political cases.

Hailing from Shariatpur, he was the eldest among three siblings. His



Azizur Rahman

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

LPG prices soar on artificial scarcity

Traders call indefinite strike for higher distribution charges

MOHAMMAD SUMAN and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Suppliers and dealers of bottled liquefied petroleum gas are selling the fuel at Tk 350-900 more than the government-fixed rates despite adequate stock.

The government fixed the price of the standard 12kg LPG cylinder at Tk 1,306 for January, but they are selling between Tk 1,650 and Tk 2,200, according to traders in Dhaka and Chattogram.

In 2025, 14.65 lakh tonnes of LPG were imported, up slightly from the previous year, with 54.2 percent of it arriving in the last six months, according to data from the National Board of Revenue. It cost importers about Tk 11,780 crore, down about 2.7 percent year on year.

The imports were led by Meghna Fresh LPG, Omera Petroleum, Jamuna Spacetech Joint Venture, Sun Gas, United Aygas LPG, Petromax LPG, Delta LPG, Bashundhara LP Gas, Premier LPG and BM Energy.

In Dhaka, dealers say the companies themselves are selling LPG at inflated rates.

"We are supposed to buy a 12kg cylinder at Tk 1,150 to sell it at the fixed rate of Tk 1,306. But the companies charge Tk 1,300-1,340, making it impossible to sell at the government fixed rate at the retail level," said Saiful Islam, a dealer in the Sadarghat area.

The Daily Star has seen at least four tax challan documents that showed a top importer sold per cylinder between Tk 1,302 and Tk 1,329 between January 4 and 7 to a distributor. The

unit rate was Tk 1,221 and 1,248 in those challans and a 7.5 percent VAT was added on top of the sum.

As per the January rate fixed by the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, the companies were supposed to sell the product at Tk 1,158 to distributors, who were supposed to sell it at Tk 1,208 to retailers.

YEAR	IMPORT (LAKH TONNE)	COST
2025	14.64	11,780cr
2024	14.41	12,101cr
2023	12.23	9,185cr

However, a retailer in the Kachukhet area was yesterday seen selling a 12kg cylinder to customers for Tk 2,100 and Tk 2,200.

"I have to buy cylinders at Tk 1,880 to Tk 1,900 from dealers. Moreover, I receive only 10-12 cylinders every 3-4 days, while daily demand exceeds 30," he said.

In Chattogram, The Daily Star visited 12 retail shops in Agrabad, Kazir Dewri, Chawkbazar, Oxygen and Muradpur and found the LPG cylinders were selling at well above the official rate. Four shops reported having no gas-filled cylinders in stock.

"Retailers are forced to sell at higher prices

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



LPG cylinders are seen chained outside closed stores in Mohammadpur amid a supply shortage of the cooking fuel. Locals allege shopkeepers are keeping shops closed so that they can use different methods to sell the cylinders at higher prices.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMON



KSRM

শেকড় থেকে শিখিবে



CA expects unanimous 'yes' in July referendum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said political parties have endorsed the July Charter and expressed confidence that they would campaign for "yes" votes in the referendum.

"I don't think any party will seek a 'no' vote," he said.

At a meeting with Paola Pampaloni, acting managing director for Asia-

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

BCB firm on not sending team to India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday reiterated its concerns over the safety and security of the Bangladesh contingent in India and reaffirmed its stance of not sending the national team to the country for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, starting on February 7.



BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul and other board directors had a meeting with the Sports Adviser Dr Asif Nazrul yesterday afternoon, after which Bulbul informed the media of their firm stance.

"We have written to the ICC highlighting the importance of safety and security. While our primary responsibility is to look after the players, there is also a large group beyond them, including journalists, sponsors, and cricket fans," Bulbul said.

"Since a government order [GO] is required for any overseas travel, we are seeking guidance from the government on this matter. If the security situation does not improve, we will continue to fight for our rights," he added.

Dr Nazrul also addressed the media, saying that there was going to be no compromise on the issues of security and dignity.

"We will not compromise with our national honour or the security of our cricketers. We of course want to play the World Cup, but only in the other host nation, Sri Lanka. We are standing firmly by this stance," he said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

POWER, ENERGY Govt unveils new 25-year master plan

Eyes clean, efficient, accessible energy for all

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has unveiled a new 25-year power and energy master plan, to be implemented from 2026 to 2050.

According to a press release from the chief adviser's press wing, implementing the plan will require an estimated \$177 billion to \$192 billion.

Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, adviser to the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, submitted the master plan to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at State House Jamuna in presence of several advisers and senior officials.

Policy gaps in the previous three master plans -- prepared in 2005, 2010, and revised in 2016 -- were identified and briefly reviewed during the meeting, the release added.

The new plan projects peak electricity demand of 59,000 megawatts (MW) by 2050, compared to 70,500 MW in the 2023 plan. Current demand is around 16,700 MW.

The 2023 integrated power and energy master plan, prepared with JICA's support, was criticised by local experts for overestimating demand and including high-cost fuel sources. Following the formation of the interim government, various quarters called for a review with input from local experts.

The new plan aims to ensure reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy for all through optimal use of domestic

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

12-yr-old's body found hanging in Ctg home

Police await post-mortem report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police recovered the hanging body of a 12 year old girl from a house in Chattogram's Lalkhan Bazar early Sunday.

The victim, Srabanti Ghosh, daughter of KEPZ security guard Tapan Ghosh and garment worker Rosy Ghosh, was a fourth-grade student at Lalkhan Bazar Government Primary School.

Contacted yesterday, Khulshi Police Station Officer in Charge Jahedul Islam said, "Police found

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Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus chairing a meeting on the "Fuel and Power Sector Master Plan 2026-2050" with several advisers and top government officials at the State Guest House Jamuna in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

VENEZUELAN OIL US to control sales 'indefinitely'

Says its energy secy; tens of billions will be needed to get the country's production back to historical highs

AFP, Washington

US Energy Secretary Chris Wright yesterday said that Washington will control sales of Venezuelan oil "indefinitely," a day after President Donald Trump announced Venezuela's interim leaders had agreed to US-managed marketing of 30-50 million barrels of crude.

"We're going to market the crude coming out of Venezuela, first this backed-up stored oil, and then indefinitely, going forward, we will sell the production that comes out of Venezuela into the marketplace," Wright said at a Goldman Sachs energy event in Miami.

Days after the US toppling of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro, which has left his deputy and other allies in charge, Wright suggested sanctions on the country's oil sector would be waived to facilitate the export of its oil.

The United States would be "the supplier" of the diluting agents needed to get Venezuela's extra-heavy crude oil ready for shipment, he said.

"As we make progress with the government, you know, we'll enable the importing of parts and equipment and services to kind of prevent the industry from collapsing, stabilize the production, and then as quickly as possible, start to see it growing again."

Wright, a former oil and gas executive, said it would require "tens of billions of dollars and significant time" to get Venezuela's production back to historical highs of over three million barrels per day.

"But why not?" he questioned.



Government supporters join a women's march toward the office of interim President Delcy Rodriguez in Caracas, Venezuela, Tuesday, days after a US strike and the capture of President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores.

PHOTO: REUTERS

observers pointed out that a quick ramp-up of output would be hamstrung by several issues including its creaking infrastructure, low prices and political uncertainty.

Trump said Tuesday that 30-50 million barrels of Venezuelan crude will be shipped to US ports, with the revenue -- perhaps more than \$2 billion at current market prices -- placed under

oil, how the plan would work, or what its legal basis would be.

"Think about where Venezuela was a week ago. You know, it's a little different today, but everything else is the same way it was," Wright said.

"So it is going to require this cooperation between -- and pressure between -- the United States and Venezuela."

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Seat-sharing knot tightens for Jamaat, IAB

FROM PAGE 1

The overlap is most pronounced in the Chattogram region, with 49 constituencies hosting rival candidates from the two parties.

Dhaka follows with 40 seats, Khulna with 34, Rajshahi and Mymensingh with 33 each, Rangpur with 30, and Barishal with 17. Sylhet records the least overlap, with eight constituencies.

Tensions escalated further after the alliance was expanded into 11 parties a day before the nomination deadline to include the National Citizen Party and others.

Islami Andolan leaders have expressed dissatisfaction with Jamaat's seat sharing proposal, demanding a larger allocation and objecting strongly to what they see as undue importance given to the newly formed NCP, including the promise of as many as 30 seats.

Another partner Bangladesh Khilafat Mailis, led by Mamunul Haque, has taken a similar position.

Islami Andolan Secretary General Maulana Yunus Ahmad acknowledged the strain.

"We were together," he said, adding that last-minute decisions had unsettled several parties.

He said the original members of the alliance were not consulted before the inclusion of new parties and assurances of sharing seats with them.

"It's not just Islami Andolan; Other parties were also displeased," he said.

Yet, the IAB secretary general insisted the raptures in the alliance were not beyond repair.

"Everyone still has the mindset to move together, and I hope this mindset won't change," he said, adding that fresh talks between Jamaat and IAB were expected soon.

From Jamaat's side, Nayeb e-Ameer Syed Abdulla Mohammad Taher struck a more optimistic note, saying progress had been made. He expressed hope that a deal would be finalised shortly.

Asked about reports of a crisis with Islami Andolan, he dismissed them outright, saying there was "no truth" to

such claims.

The fractures are most visible in constituencies where top leaders are pitted against one another.

In Cumilla-II, Jamaat's Taher faces IAB's Md Mohiuddin. Jamaat Nayeb e-Ameer ATM Azharul Islam is contesting Rangpur-2, where IAB has nominated Ashraf Ali.

Khulna-5 features Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar, while Islami Andolan's Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had his nomination rejected; Bangladesh Khilafat Majlis candidate Md Abdul Qayyum Jamadar remains in the race there.

In Sirajganj-4, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Maulana Rafiqul Islam Khan is up against Islami Andolan's Abdur Rahman. Cox's Bazar-2 has become a three-way contest, with Jamaat's former MP and Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad appealing after rejection, IAB's Ziaul Haq in the race, and Khilafat Majlis nominee Obaidul Qader Nadi also contesting.

Similar rivalries unfold elsewhere: former MP Shahjahan Chowdhury in Chattogram-15 faces IAB's Shariful Alam Chowdhury; Jamaat Dhaka South city Ameer Nurul Islam Bulbul contests Chapainawabganj-3 against IAB's Md Monirul Islam. In Khulna-4, IAB Secretary General Yunus Ahmad is running against Jamaat's Md Kabirul Islam.

Bardishal has emerged as another flashpoint. Jamaat candidates Muazzam Hossain Helal and Md Mahamudunnabi are contesting Bardishal-5 and Bardishal-6 respectively, seats where IAB Senior Nayeb e-Ameer Md Syed Muhammad Faizul Karim is also an aspirant. IAB leaders Syed Eshak Md Abdul Khayer and Syed Md Mosaddeq Billah are contesting Bardishal-4 and Dhaka-4, where Jamaat candidates Mohammad Abdul Jabbar and Syed Zainul Abedin have also filed nominations.

There are, however, rare pockets of unity. No alliance partner has fielded a candidate against Jamaat Ameer

Shafiqur Rahman in Dhaka-15.

Beyond these high profile contests, numerous constituencies across the country feature aspirants from three or more alliance partners, underscoring the depth of the coordination challenge facing the bloc.

Despite the turbulence, the alliance itself is historic. This marks the first time in nearly four decades that Jamaat and Islami Andolan Bangladesh have entered into a formal electoral alliance.

Jamaat was banned along with other religion-based parties after Bangladesh's independence in 1972.

With the prohibition lifted later, the party returned to national elections under its original name in 1986, achieving its best result in 1991 with 18 seats and 12.13 percent of the popular vote.

Jamaat boycotted the 2014 and 2024 polls and contested the 2018 election using the BNP's paddy sheaf symbol as part of the BNP-led alliance. Its registration was cancelled in 2013 following a High Court verdict, but restored along with its symbol in June 2025.

Islami Andolan Bangladesh traces its roots to Islami Shashontanta Andolan, founded in 1987 by Syed Fazlul Karim, the then Pir of Charmonai. After his death in 2006, leadership passed onto his son Syed Rezaul Karim.

The party adopted its current name to comply with Election Commission registration rules ahead of the 2008 polls.

EC data show the party secured 11,159 votes in June 1996, and more than 12 lakh votes in the 2018 election -- the third highest tally after the Awami League and the BNP-led alliance, although the polls were marrred by allegations of widespread ballot stuffing the night before voting. In 2014 and 2024, IAB also boycotted the polls.

Political analysts say the growing prominence of Islamist parties in recent years, particularly following the recent student-led mass uprising, has lent new urgency and higher stakes to efforts at unity.

Swechchhasebak Dal leader shot dead

family lives in a house on Garden Road of West Karwan Bazar. He was a BNP-backed candidate for the councillor post in Ward-26 of Tejgaon during the city corporation polls in 2020.

Mohammed Javed, who accompanied Masud, said Musabir and Masud were first taken to BRB Hospital before Masud was transferred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Masud got shot on the left side of his abdomen and is receiving treatment in the emergency ward of the DMCH, said Inspector Md. Faruq, in charge of the police camp at the hospital.

A spate of killings, especially some targeted ones involving the use of firearms at crowded places in Dhaka and elsewhere, has stirred concerns about the state of law and order ahead of the national election, slated for February 12.

Rights body Ain o Salish Kendra recorded at least 401 incidents of political violence that left 102 people dead and 4,744 injured in 2025.

Since the election date was announced, at least six people have been killed, including three in the past seven days, and 250 others injured in political violence, according to the rights group Manabdhikar Shongkruti Foundation and media reports.

CA expects

FROM PAGE 1

Pacific at the European External Action Service, he said the referendum, to be held alongside the general election scheduled for February 12, would mark a historic moment for the country.

"People in this country have not been able to vote in free and fair elections for the past 16 years under autocratic rule. This time, they will vote festively."

The referendum will ask voters to approve the July Charter, a reform framework agreed upon by major political parties as part of the transition process. The charter focuses on strengthening democratic institutions, restoring electoral credibility, limiting the concentration of executive power, and safeguarding fundamental rights.

The chief adviser's special envoy Lutfey Siddiqi; SDG Coordinator and Senior Secretary Lamiya Morshed; and European Union Ambassador to Bangladesh Michael Miller were present at the meeting.

Meanwhile, Prof Ali Riaz, special assistant to the chief adviser, as the chief guest of a virtual meeting with agriculture ministry officials yesterday said that the purpose of the referendum is to ensure that Bangladesh does not return "to a fascist system."

"This opportunity for a referendum will not come again in the next five or 10 years. Everyone must work together to seize this opportunity to determine how Bangladesh will move forward."

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Long term strategic projects include offshore exploration, increased gas production, LNG supply security, refinery capacity expansion, and strategic energy storage development.

According to the release, the master plan will be implemented in three phases: 2026-2030, 2030-2040, and 2040-2050.

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Govt unveils

FROM PAGE 1

resources, energy security, efficiency improvements, and environmental responsibility, the press release said.

The plan emphasises on efficiency gains and clean energy for reducing climate impacts while creating economic opportunities, despite rapid energy sector growth. Although high electricity generation may create environmental and social pressures, the plan incorporates cleaner and more efficient technologies, cutting emissions per megawatt-hour from 0.6 to 0.35 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

The statement said this could reduce 64.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually and a total of 1,600 million tonnes by 2050.

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Priority projects in the first phase include offshore exploration, increased gas production, LNG supply



Unimaginable in a civilised state: Yunus
CID hands over report on bodies buried during uprising

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said the brutal acts committed by the ousted Awami League government -- killing the country's citizens and burying them in mass graves -- are "rare in world history" and unimaginable in any civilised state.

He made the remarks while receiving a report on DNA sample collection from 114 unidentified

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



Mobile phone traders form a human chain near Bashundhara City Shopping Mall in Dhaka yesterday, demanding postponement of the National Equipment Identity Register (NEIR) system's implementation, release of detained colleagues, withdrawal of cases filed by BTRC, tax reductions, permission to import used phones, and simplification of the handset import process.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Tarique's four-day tour of the North begins Jan 11

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman will begin his first tour outside Dhaka since returning to the country with a four-day visit to the northern region, starting on January 11.

According to the party's schedule, Tarique will depart Dhaka on January 11 and return on January 14, visiting nine districts during the tour.

On January 11, he will travel to Tangail, Sirajganj, and Bogura, where he will stay overnight. On January 12, he will visit Rangpur, Dinajpur, and Thakurgaon, spending the night in Thakurgaon.

On January 13, Tarique will travel from Thakurgaon to Panchagarh, Nilphamari, and Lalmonirhat, before returning to Rangpur for the night. He will return to Dhaka on January 14 via Rangpur and Gantali in Bogura.

During the tour, Tarique will visit the graves of

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a rally yesterday demanded an end to the killing and torture of Bangladeshi citizens by India's Border Security Force (BSF) and protested what they described as aggressive actions along the Bangladesh-India border.

Rights organisation Odhikar held the rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club, with family members of several victims in attendance. Participants called for justice for the victims.

The programme marked 15 years since the killing of Felani Khatun, whose death in 2011 sparked widespread outrage at home and abroad.

Felani, a Bangladeshi teenager, was shot dead by BSF personnel on January 7, 2011, while crossing the barbed-wire fence with her father at the Anantapur border in Phulbari upazila of Kurigram.

Her body remained hanging from the fence for hours, becoming a global symbol of border-related human rights abuses.

Speakers said killings, torture and push-ins along the border violate international human rights law.

They also alleged that India is involved in the enforced disappearances of Bangladeshi citizens.

They urged the government to ensure justice, compensate victims' families and raise the issue at international forums.

Mahadeb Kumar Singh, father

of Jayanta Kumar Singh, a teenage boy killed by BSF gunfire in September 2024, recounted the incident. He said his son had gone to visit relatives in India.

"I later found my son shot inside the barbed-wire fence. When I tried to go forward, BSF members fired at me as well. I was shot in the leg and my son in the neck," he said, adding that his son was between 13 and 14 years old and had committed no crime.



The programme marked 15 years since the killing of Felani Khatun, whose death in 2011 sparked widespread outrage at home and abroad.

"I have still not received justice. Do the lives of poor people living along the border have no value?" he asked, demanding exemplary punishment for those responsible.

Odhikar Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan said the killing of Felani had shaken the nation, yet border killings and torture have continued.

He alleged that Bangladeshi citizens are being detained, tortured and fired upon, and that

women face sexual violence.

Despite international laws and bilateral agreements governing border management, India is not complying with them, he said.

Another Odhikar Director, Taskin Fahmina, citing the organisation's data, said at least 625 Bangladeshi citizens were killed by BSF gunfire or torture between 2009 and 2025, including 25 children and adolescents. During the same period, 808 people were injured.

She also alleged that nearly 2,500 Bangla-speaking people, including Indian nationals and Rohingyas, were pushed into Bangladesh without diplomatic procedures.

Rahmatullah of Dhamrai alleged that he was picked up by Rab on August 29, 2023, held blindfolded and handcuffed for nine months, and later sent to India, where he spent seven and a half months in prison before returning home.

He demanded justice for those responsible for his enforced disappearance.

Meanwhile, police blocked the National Citizens Party's "Anti-Hegemony March" toward the Indian High Commission, where activists demanded justice for Felani.

Leaders and activists of the NCP's Dhaka North unit gathered in Shahjadpur of Badda and marched toward the Indian High Commission in Baridhara. Police

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

Mercury dips further across country Rajshahi records lowest temperature at 6.7°C

STAR REPORT

The ongoing cold wave has continued to grip the country, with temperatures plunging further yesterday, severely disrupting agricultural activities, daily life, and livelihoods.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, the cold spell is affecting Dhaka, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Khulna, and Barishal divisions and may persist in the coming days.

The current situation may continue for another week until mid-January, said Omar Faruk, a meteorologist.

In response, the Bangladesh Agro-Meteorological Information Service issued urgent advisories to minimise damage to crops and farm assets during excessive cold and fog.

Farmers have been urged to provide light but regular irrigation to fruit trees, cover young plants with straw or polythene to block cold winds, take extra care of boro rice seedbeds during the cold spell, cover nurseries and seedbeds with transparent polythene from 3:00pm to 10:00am, protect livestock and poultry sheds with burlap or black cloth while keeping high voltage bulbs lit to maintain warmth, and monitor pulses, mustard, and potato fields closely and treat them with recommended medicines as necessary to prevent disease outbreaks.

Meanwhile, suffering intensified as the temperature dropped further in the northern region yesterday.

The Met office recorded the country's lowest temperature of the season in Rajshahi for the second consecutive day at 6.7 degrees Celsius in the Badalgachhi area.

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Dense fog engulfs traffic on Babubazar Bridge in Dhaka yesterday as a cold wave grips the country, reducing visibility and disrupting daily life.

Ensure voter clarity on referendum
Speakers urge EC at Shujan roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday urged the Election Commission (EC) to lead a large-scale public awareness campaign on the upcoming referendum to prevent political controversy and ensure the process is not perceived as partisan.

They said the referendum is a crucial step to prevent the return of fascism, but warned that the public remains largely unaware of the technical details and significance of the 48 proposed constitutional reforms.

The discussion, titled "Referendum 2026: What and Why?", was organised by Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) at the CIRDAP auditorium in the capital.

At the event, Labour and Employment Adviser Brig Gen (retd) Md Sakhawat Hussain said relying on the government for publicity could be counterproductive.

"The EC's responsibility is not only to conduct the referendum but also to explain it to the people. If only the government does this, the process will face criticism and be labelled partisan," he said.

Drawing on his experience as a former election

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HADI MURDER Freeze bank accounts of accused: court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the confiscation of Tk 65.5 lakh from 53 bank accounts belonging to Faisal Karim Masud, his wife Shaheda Parvin Samia, and two individuals and institutions linked to him, over suspicious transactions.

Judge Md Sabir Faiz of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court also directed the authorities to freeze the accounts following an application filed by CID, said court bench assistant Riaz Hossain.

According to the CID, a money-laundering allegation against Faisal -- prime accused in the killing of Inqilab Moncho -- spokesperson Sharif Osman Hadi -- and those linked to him is currently under investigation.

The application said analysis of the accounts revealed a large number of suspicious transactions involving Faisal and associated individuals and institutions.

2 sent to jail over rape in Magura

A CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

Two youths were sent to jail yesterday on charges of raping a woman in Magura's Mohammadpur upazila.

The accused are Nafis Ahmed Shadhin, 22, and Sizan Mahmud Sani, 20, of the upazila.

Police said the 30-year-old victim, wife of an expatriate, works at a jute mill in Faridpur's Boalmari upazila.

She travels daily from Mohammadpur to Boalmari on the mill's transport, said Md Ashrafuzzaman, officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station.

On Monday night, she got down from the mill's transport around 11:00pm at Mezba's brick field intersection and was walking home when four people intercepted her, took her to a secluded place, and raped her, said the OC.

She filed a case accusing the four the next day.

Police arrested two of them the same night, said Abul Khayer, inspector (investigation) and investigation officer of the case. The duo was

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

'July fighters abandoned by NCP during crisis'

Alleges SAD president Rifat Rashid

DU CORRESPONDENT

Students Against Discrimination (SAD) president Rifat Rashid yesterday alleged that the leaders of National Citizen Party (NCP), who had emerged through the July uprising, did not stand beside the July fighters in times of crisis.

Questioning NCP's role in the recent arrests of SAD's Habiganj unit member secretary Mahdi Hasan and "July fighter" Tahrima Jannat Surovi, Rifat said the party issued statements only after their release.

"Those NCP leaders who rose through the July uprising -- every single one of them -- remained silent when they [Mahdi and Surovi] were in danger," he added.

Addressing a press

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Didar A
Husain re-
elected IUB
chairman

CITY DESK

Didar A
Husain, a
founding
trustee of
Independent
University, Bangladesh
(IUB), has been re-elected
chairman of the IUB Board
of Trustees for 2026-27, said
a press release.



Hanif directed AL men to violently suppress July protesters

Prosecution witness tells ICT-2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fifth prosecution witness in a crimes against humanity case against Awami League joint general secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif yesterday told the International Crimes Tribunal 2 that Hanif had directed party cadres to that Hanif had directed party cadres to

that AL activists attempted to prevent the injured from receiving medical treatment at hospitals. He also said students' processions earlier on August 3 and 4 were met with tear gas and violent assaults, escalating the situation ahead of the deadly crackdown.

Sajedur sought the maximum punishment for the accused.

Meanwhile, the ICT-1 yesterday deferred the charge-framing hearing against Sajeeb Wazed Joy, former ICT adviser to deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, and Zunaid Ahmed Palak, former state minister for ICT, to

January 11 in a separate crimes against humanity case over their alleged roles during the 2024 July uprising.

The defence lawyer representing Palak, who was produced before court, sought permission for privileged communication, which the tribunal granted.

Earlier, on December 17, Advocate Monjur Alam was appointed state defence counsel for fugitive accused Joy.

In other developments, cross-examinations of investigation officers continued in two cases – one filed over the killing of Begum Rokeya University student Abu Sayed with ICT-2, and another involving the killing of two people and injury to two others in Rampura with ICT-1.

আন্তর্জাতিক অপরাধ ট্রাইবুনাল
INTERNATIONAL CRIMES TRIBUNAL

আন্তর্জাতিক অপরাধ ট্রাইবুনাল
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INTERNATIONAL

'If we don't win midterms, I'll get impeached'
Trump tells House Republicans

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that Republicans must win the 2026 congressional midterm elections - or else he will get impeached by Democrats.

"You gotta win the midterms 'cause, if we don't win the midterms, it's just gonna be - I mean, they'll find a reason to impeach me," Trump told Republican lawmakers at a retreat in Washington. "I'll get impeached."

He told them to put aside their differences and sell his policies on healthcare and election integrity to an American electorate angry about the cost of living.



House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer lead Democrats and families of fallen Capitol Police officers in a moment of silence marking the fifth anniversary of the January 6, 2021 attacks, outside the US Capitol in Washington, DC, Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

UN accuses Israel of 'apartheid' in West Bank

Volker Turk urges repeal of Israel's discriminatory laws against Palestinians

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations yesterday said decades of discrimination and segregation of Palestinians by Israel in the West Bank were intensifying, and called on the country to end its "apartheid system".

In a new report, the UN rights office said the "systematic discrimination" against Palestinians across the occupied Palestinian territories had "drastically deteriorated" in recent years.

"There is a systematic asphyxiation of the rights of Palestinians in the West Bank," UN rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement.

"Whether accessing water, school, rushing to hospital, visiting family or friends, or harvesting olives -- every aspect of life for Palestinians in the West Bank is controlled and curtailed by Israel's discriminatory laws, policies and practices," he added.

"This is a particularly severe form of racial discrimination and segregation, that resembles the kind of apartheid system we have seen before."

A number of independent experts affiliated with the UN have described the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories as an "apartheid" but this marks the first time a UN rights chief has applied the term.

Yesterday's report said the Israeli authorities "treat Israeli settlers and Palestinians residing in the West



Bank under two distinct bodies of law and policies, resulting in unequal treatment on a range of critical issues".

Palestinians continue to be subjected to large-scale confiscation of land and deprivation of access to resources," it added.

This had led to "dispossessing them of their lands and homes, alongside other forms of systemic discrimination, including criminal prosecution in military courts during which their due process and fair trial rights are systematically violated".

Turk demanded yesterday that Israel "repeal all laws, policies and practices that perpetuate systemic discrimination against Palestinians based on race, religion or ethnic

origin".

The discrimination was compounded by continuing and escalating settler violence, in many cases "with the acquiescence, support and participation of Israel's security forces", the rights office said.

More than 500,000 Israelis currently live in settlements in the West Bank, occupied since 1967 and home to around three million Palestinians.

Violence has risen in recent years, surging especially since Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack, which triggered the Gaza war.

Since the start of the war, Israeli troops and settlers have killed more than 1,000 Palestinians in the West Bank.

Passenger dies

FROM PAGE 12

to Dhaka rather than making an emergency landing at a nearby airport.

The return flight took nearly three hours. Upon arrival in Dhaka, an airport doctor declared the passenger dead, officials said.

Boshra Islam, Biman's general manager (public relations), said a three-member probe committee, headed by Captain Md Enamul Haque, chief of flight safety, has been formed to investigate the incident.

A Biman pilot, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there has been a recent rise in onboard medical emergencies on the airline, including diversions and passenger deaths.

"When measured against flight volume, the rate of such incidents appears significantly higher than that of comparable international airlines," he said.

Sources also raised allegations against some ground staff for issuing boarding passes to passengers in poor health and for lapses in pre-boarding medical screening.

Officials, requesting anonymity, said that on multiple occasions ground staff knowingly issued boarding passes to passengers in poor health and, in some cases, failed to properly observe passengers' physical condition at check-in, raising concerns about compliance with pre-boarding medical screening procedures.

Despite the seriousness of the incident, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) did not initiate an independent investigation.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয়

শেরেবাংলা নগর, ঢাকা ১২০৭

www.mod.gov.bd

০৮ পৌরী ১৪৩২

তারিখ: ২৩ ডিসেম্বর ২০২৫

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয়ের আওতাধীন মিলিটারি ইনসিটিউট অব সাইল আর্ট টেকনোলজি (এমআইএসটি)-এর জন্য নিম্নরূপ খেতু সর্বোচ্চ আওতাধীন মন্ত্রণালয়ের কর্মসূচির নিম্নের হিতে অনলাইনে (https://career.mist.ac.bd ওয়েবসাইটে) সর্বাধিক আবেদন করা যাইতেছে।

ক্রমিক	পদের নাম, বেতন ক্ষেত্র ও প্রেৰণ (জাতীয় বেতন ক্ষেত্র ২০১৫ অনুমানী)	পদের সংখ্যা	১১ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬ তারিখে সর্বোচ্চ বর্ষসীমা	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা
১	সিভিলিয়ান স্টাফ অফিসার-২ (সিএস-২) জিওগ্রাফিক ইন্ফোরেশন সিস্টেম (জিআইএস) এনালিস্ট বেতনক্ষেত্রঃ ঢাকা ১৫৫০০-৬৭১০১০ (যোত্ত-৬)	০১	৩৫ বৎসর	(ক) কোনো স্থীরু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে হিতে সিভিল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং, জিওগ্রাফিক ইন্ফোরেশন সার্কেল এনালাইনে প্রাপ্তি কর্মসূচি বা আবেদন কর্তৃপক্ষ বা বেতনক্ষেত্র প্রাপ্তি কর্মসূচি বা সম্মানের সিজিপিএস প্রাত্তিক্রিয়া ক্ষেত্র এবং (খ) স্ট্রাকচার কাজে নথম গ্রেডের পদে ৫ (পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা; (গ) স্ট্রাকচার কাজে নথম গ্রেডের পদে ৫ (পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা;
২	সিভিলিয়ান স্টাফ অফিসার-২ (সিএস-২) অ্যালিস্ট বেতনক্ষেত্রঃ ঢাকা ১৫৫০০-৬৭১০১০ (যোত্ত-৬)	০১	৩৫ বৎসর	(ক) কোনো স্থীরু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে হিতে স্ট্রাকচার কাজে নথম গ্রেডের পদে ৫ (পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা; (খ) স্ট্রাকচার কাজে নথম গ্রেডের পদে ৫ (পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা;
৩	প্রেসামার (সিভিলিয়ান স্টাফ অফিসার-২ (সিএস-২)) বেতনক্ষেত্রঃ ঢাকা ১৫৫০০-৬৭১০১০ (যোত্ত-৬)	০১	৩৫ বৎসর	(ক) কোনো স্থীরু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে হিতে কম্পিউটার সার্কেল/সিপিটার সার্কেল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং/ইন্ফোরেশন এনালাইনে প্রাপ্তি কর্মসূচি বা আবেদন কর্তৃপক্ষ বা বেতনক্ষেত্র প্রাপ্তি কর্মসূচি বা সম্মানের সিজিপিএস ৪ (চার) বৎসর বেতনক্ষেত্র ক্ষেত্র এবং (খ) কোনো সরকারি/বাহ্যিক প্রাত্তিক্রিয়া ক্ষেত্রে কাজে নথম গ্রেডের পদে ৫ (পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা ;
৪	স্টেটওয়ার্ক মেইনটেনেন্স ইঞ্জিনিয়ার (সিভিলিয়ান স্টাফ অফিসার-২ (সিএস-২)) বেতনক্ষেত্রঃ ঢাকা ১৫৫০০-৬৭১০১০ (যোত্ত-৬)	০১	৩৫ বৎসর	(ক) কোনো স্থীরু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে হিতে কম্পিউটার সার্কেল/সিপিটার সার্কেল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং/ইন্ফোরেশন এনালাইনে প্রাপ্তি কর্মসূচি বা আবেদন কর্তৃপক্ষ বা বেতনক্ষেত্র প্রাপ্তি কর্মসূচি বা সম্মানের সিজিপিএস ৪ (চার) বৎসর বেতনক্ষেত্র ক্ষেত্র এবং (খ) স্ট্রাকচার কাজে নথম গ্রেডের পদে ৫ (পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা ;
৫	সহকারী প্রকৌশলী বেতনক্ষেত্রঃ ঢাকা ২২০০০- ৫৩০৬০- (যোত্ত-৪)	০১	৩২ বৎসর	(ক) কোনো স্থীরু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে হিতে স্ট্রাকচার কাজে নথম গ্রেডের পদে ৫ (পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা ;
৬	সহকারী প্রকৌশলী (ল্যাবরেটরি) বেতনক্ষেত্রঃ ঢাকা ২২০০০-৫৩০৬০- (যোত্ত-৯)	০১	৩২ বৎসর	(ক) কোনো স্থীরু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে হিতে স্ট্রাকচার কাজে নথম গ্রেডের পদে ৫ (পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা ;
৭	স্টেটওয়ার্ক মেইনটেনেন্স ইঞ্জিনিয়ার (সিভিলিয়ান স্টাফ অফিসার-২ (সিএস-২)) বেতনক্ষেত্রঃ ঢাকা ১৫৫০০-৬৭১০১০ (যোত্ত-৬)	০১	৩২ বৎসর	(ক) কোনো স্থীরু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে হিতে স্ট্রাকচার কাজে নথম গ্রেডের পদে ৫ (পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা ;
৮	সহকারী প্রকৌশলী শাস্তি একাডেমিক (সিভিলিয়ান স্টাফ অফিসার-২ (সিএস-২)) বেতনক্ষেত্রঃ ঢাকা ১৫৫০০-৬৭১০১০ (যোত্ত-৬)	০১	৩২ বৎসর	(ক) কোনো স্থীরু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে হিতে স্ট্রাকচার কাজে নথম গ্রেডের পদে ৫ (পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা ;
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১৩	অ্যাকাডেমিক প্রকৌশলী বেতনক্ষেত্রঃ ঢাকা ২২০০০-৫৩০৬০- (যোত্ত-৮)	০১	৩২ বৎসর	(ক) কোনো স্থীরু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে হিতে স্ট্রাকচার কাজে নথম গ্রেডের পদে ৫ (পাঁচ) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা ;
১৪	অ্যাকাডেমিক প্রকৌশলী বেতনক্ষেত্রঃ ঢাকা ২২০০০-৫			

An alarming uptick in brutal crimes

People's sense of insecurity must be alleviated

With only a few weeks left before the national elections, one of the most decisive factors potentially affecting voter turnout is people's sense of security. A spate of brutal killings in recent months has understandably heightened fear and uncertainty. Human rights defenders have expressed alarm over the sharp rise in violent crime and the government's failure to rein it in, questioning the state's capacity to ensure a credible electoral environment.

On December 31, businessman Khokon Chandra Das was hacked and set on fire by armed assailants in Shariatpur. On January 3, Alamgir Hossain, a BNP leader, was shot dead by miscreants in Jashore town. On January 5, Rana Pratap Bairagi, the owner of an ice factory, was shot dead in a village in Jashore, while Moni Chakraborty, a grocery shop owner, was hacked to death in Narsingdi the same day. A former Jubi Dal leader, Jane Alam Sikder, was also shot dead in Chattogram's Raozan upazila that night. On January 6, Md Shahabuddin, a trader, was hacked to death in Dhaka's Kadamtali area. Overall, at least eight were reportedly killed in the first six days of January.

These murders mark a grim start to the New Year. Even more troubling is the relative ineffectiveness—and in some cases, reluctance—of law enforcement agencies to act decisively against miscreants. Data on the overall law and order situation also compound this concern. According to a Samakal report, 1,333 firearms belonging to the police and 27 belonging to prison authorities, stolen during the 2024 uprising, remain missing to this day. Of the hundreds of convicts who had escaped at the time, 710 are still at large, including individuals accused of heinous crimes such as murder. Meanwhile, the much-publicised "Operation Devil Hunt," under which around 27,229 individuals were arrested in two phases, has failed to reduce crime.

The same Samakal report, citing police sources, records that 197 people were killed by mobs in 2025, alongside 102 political murders. One could easily assume that a major enabler of the murders is the circulation of arms. These realities have cast a dark shadow over the February 12 election. Against this backdrop, the government's foremost responsibility must be to take proper measures to curb crime. This requires ensuring a non-partisan and effective role for security forces. Their drives must target actual criminals, and not involve indiscriminate crackdowns on individuals without reasonable suspicion. Investigations into the recent murders must be rigorous, and perpetrators brought to justice regardless of their ties to powerful groups.

There must also be renewed urgency in recovering the missing and illegally circulating arms. As the chief election commissioner has urged, law enforcement agencies must remain especially vigilant in protecting minority communities, who are often targeted during election periods. While ensuring security is primarily the state's duty, political parties must also act responsibly. All parties should ensure that their activists and workers refrain from violence and criminal behaviour. Their professed commitment to the spirit of July uprising and to democracy will be measured by their ability to avoid the toxic rivalries that have so often descended into violence.

Improve the plight of Dayaganj-Jurain Road

Neglect and poor coordination have rendered it hazardous

The worsening condition of the Dayaganj-Jurain road, once a vital urban artery connecting Old Dhaka to the city's southern gateways, is concerning. Just four to five years ago, this stretch functioned as a busy two-way thoroughfare with a divider to facilitate smooth traffic flow. However, after Bangladesh Railway (BR) constructed a boundary wall along the rail line, the road has been effectively reduced to a narrow, damaged corridor that poses constant risks to commuters.

The impact of this ill-planned decision is evident along the entire route from Dayaganj Crossing to Jurain Railgate. Half of the road—the western portion—has remained abandoned for years, turning into a dumping ground for garbage, an informal parking zone for trucks and rickshaws, and even a site for makeshift shanties. The usable portion, meanwhile, is riddled with potholes, frequently waterlogged during rain, and forced to carry two-way traffic despite being too narrow. Accidents, especially involving rickshaws and auto-rickshaws, have become a regular occurrence here.

According to locals, if properly restored, the road could once again play an important role in easing traffic pressure. However, the apparent lack of coordination and accountability among the responsible authorities has contributed to its deplorable condition. Dhaka South City Corporation points to jurisdictional limitations and funding constraints, noting that the land belongs to the railway. A rail project was reportedly meant to renovate the entire road, but completed only some of the work before halting work. Now BR remains silent about the situation.

Our road transport sector has long been plagued by corruption, mismanagement, poor planning, and weak oversight. The situation of Dayaganj-Jurain Road is not unique. Across the country, many roads are built or rebuilt at great expense, only to be damaged within a few years due to the use of substandard materials and inadequate supervision. The failures are repetitive, and accountability is rare. This must change.

We urge the government, particularly Bangladesh Railway and Dhaka South City Corporation, to take immediate and coordinated action. A clear decision must be made on the future of this road—whether through proper redevelopment, redesign to ensure safety, or an alternative traffic solution. The Dayaganj-Jurain Road serves a significant portion of the city's population, and it is strategically important too. It cannot be left in the current state of chaos and neglect.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

El Chapo captured

On this day in 2016, Mexican criminal Joaquin Guzman (El Chapo), head of the Sinaloa drug cartel, was captured in Los Mochis after escaping prison some six months earlier; he was later extradited to the United States, where he was convicted of various crimes.

EDITORIAL

Is grievance politics clouding the future of Ganges treaty?

A CLOSER LOOK

Tasneem Tayeb
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TASNEEM TAYEB

As Bangladesh and India begin the long, delicate process of discussing the future of the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, the real challenge may not lie in hydrology, technical committees, or even climate variability. It lies in politics—specifically, in the temperament and trust that frame diplomacy, at a moment when both are in short supply.

The treaty, signed in 1996 for a 30-year term, expires in December 2026. Its renewal should have been a routine exercise: a chance to modernise an existing framework, accounting for climate stress, and reaffirm a commitment to amicable neighbourly river governance. Instead, it has become entangled in a far more volatile mix of domestic politics, extreme nationalist rhetoric, and shifting regional alignments, particularly within Bangladesh's own political discourse.

Water-sharing treaties do not exist in a vacuum. They are sustained not only by clauses and flow measurements but also by political goodwill and the ability of governments to navigate complexities at home.

Since the ouster of the previous regime—many of whose leaders sought refuge in India—the tone of cross-border rhetoric has hardened, extending beyond official channels into media narratives and public discourse in both countries. It is no longer confined to policy critique or topical disagreement. In Bangladesh, it increasingly draws from a grievance narrative that frames India as a regional power accustomed to setting terms rather than negotiating them. This framing does not emerge solely from a shift in ideology; it is rooted in the perception that past arrangements have too often reflected asymmetry rather than accommodation. For many in Bangladesh, this perception is inseparable from the Farakka issue itself—a dispute that continues to determine how downstream vulnerability is experienced.

Water, in this narrative, has become an even deeper grievance, symptomatic of unequal, constrained relations and unfulfilled promises. It is an emotionally resonant narrative that carries risks.

Rhetoric alone, however, does not undo treaties. Bangladesh's interim administration is pursuing the negotiations. Institutional channels remain open to dialogue. Yet, diplomacy is shaped as much by

atmosphere as by structure. And the atmosphere today is markedly different from the one in which the treaty was signed.

India, too, has changed. The regional power that signed the Ganges Treaty in the mid-1990s, amid post-Cold War optimism and a desire to stabilise neighbourhood relations, shaped in part by the Gujral Doctrine, is not the India of today. Contemporary Indian foreign policy is more domestically constrained, more transactional, and far less inclined to absorb political costs for the sake of neighbourly goodwill. Water-sharing is now increasingly viewed through a

lens. Thus, it binds upstream states to the politics of allocation, diversion, and scarcity. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the river underpins agriculture and carries its own political weight.

In such a climate, public hostility from across the border—even when it does not form part of official policy but surfaces through off-handed, unguarded political remarks—hardens resistance, emboldening those arguing against any accommodation of Bangladesh's needs.

For Bangladesh, the implications are profound. Water security is an existential issue for us. The Ganges sustains our agriculture in the southwest, protects the Sundarbans from salinity intrusion, and underpins rural livelihoods already strained by climate stress. A weakened post-2026 arrangement would not merely be a diplomatic setback for Bangladesh; it would have material consequences for our food security, ecological sustenance, and internal stability.

The next government in Bangladesh, regardless of who forms it following

increasingly diversified foreign relations, particularly its deepening economic ties with China, are often interpreted in India as signals of a strategic shift. While Dhaka has consistently insisted on strategic autonomy rather than alignment, perceptions matter.

Practically speaking, Bangladesh has limited alternatives when it comes to water. Infrastructure partnerships, investment flows, and diplomatic support can be diversified; river water cannot. No external actor can substitute for upstream cooperation on the Ganges. This is a bilateral issue between Bangladesh and India alone. This asymmetry places the onus on Bangladesh to manage relations with India carefully even if domestic politics make that difficult.

The interim administration's more legalistic framing of the issue reflects this awareness. By emphasising equity, international norms, and climate realities, rather than bilateral grievance, it has so far avoided upfront escalation. The question is whether this restraint will hold as electoral politics intensify and nationalist voices grow louder, especially among certain political quarters.

None of this suggests that Bangladesh should mute legitimate concerns or accept inequitable outcomes. On the contrary, the case for a stronger, more adaptive Ganges agreement is compelling. Climate change alone demands recalibration. But strength in diplomacy is measured by outcomes.

The emphasis, therefore, should be on defending our interests without burning the bridges needed to secure them; articulating grievances without turning them into grievance politics, and recognising that temperament in diplomacy, is not cosmetic—it is strategic positioning. The real risk is not that the Ganges Treaty will collapse under the weight of nationalist rhetoric or grievance politics; it is the gradual thinning of the space in which a better treaty could have been negotiated.

What this moment calls for is deliberate political calibration. A renewed Ganges agreement will require engagement that extends beyond formal negotiations at the central level, rebuilding confidence across states, constituencies, and political players that have a direct stake in the river's future. This requires sustained back-channel communication not only between governments but also with state-level actors upstream, where water anxiety is at times acutely felt.

It also demands a more thoughtful effort to shape public discourse at home, one that prepares domestic audiences for the realities of negotiation rather than framing compromise as capitulation. In a region where rivers bind neighbours whether they like it or not, the careful preservation of diplomatic space matters as much as any clause on paper.



The Farakka Barrage on the Ganges in West Bengal, the key control point for upstream water diversion and central to the Ganges Waters Treaty between India and Bangladesh.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

lens of strategic national leverage and internal politics.

This is where Bangladeshi posturing matters: not because it provokes retaliation, but because it shapes India's internal calculations. Any renewed Ganges agreement requires not just the central government's approval in New Delhi, but political buy-in from West Bengal, the Indian state most directly affected by this treaty. That buy-in has always been fragile. With state assembly elections on the horizon and water scarcity sharpening domestic anxieties, Indian negotiators operate within narrow political margins.

The Ganges also flows through four other Indian states, including Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, before reaching the

lens of strategic national leverage and internal politics.

the February elections, will inherit this dilemma. It will face a public less tolerant of perceived deference.

At the same time, it will confront a negotiating partner with little appetite for political risk and significant domestic constraints of its own.

If the next government softens its tone too much, it risks being accused of capitulation. If it hardens its stance, it risks shrinking the very negotiating space needed to secure a sustainable agreement. The danger is not outright failure but a subpar outcome: short-term extensions instead of long-term guarantees, vague review mechanisms in place of enforceable commitments, and continuity without security.

There is also a broader geopolitical landscape to consider. Bangladesh's

THE SPIRIT OF NORDIC DAY

Building inclusive societies, stronger together

Christian Brix Møller
is the ambassador of Denmark to Bangladesh.
Kimmo Lähdvirta
is the ambassador of Finland to Bangladesh.
Håkon Arald Gulbrandsen
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Nicolas Weeks
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CHRISTIAN BRIX MØLLER,
KIMMO LÄHDDEVIRTA, HÅKON
ARALD GULBRANDSEN, and
NICOLAS WEEKS

Bangladesh stands in the middle of a democratic transition, a chance for a new start. At this defining juncture, the theme of this year's Nordic Day, "Inclusive societies—stronger together," serves as a timely reminder that inclusion is a pathway to democracy.

The Nordic Day marks the signing of the Helsinki Treaty on March 23, 1962, by Nordic countries and symbolises the enduring commitment to cooperation, inclusion, and shared progress.

The Nordic countries are united by a deep commitment to inclusion, equality, and social justice—ideals that form the foundation of our societies. We believe that regional cooperation, trust between citizens and government,

and equality are the pillars of a strong society. These principles are upheld through robust welfare systems, strong anti-discrimination laws, and a culture of openness and accountability.

But these values are not unique to the Nordics. They are universal, and their relevance is especially clear in times of political and social transition. Across the world, and here in Bangladesh, we see that overcoming division through inclusion makes societies stronger, more resilient, and better equipped to achieve collective progress. Most societies are diverse and pluralistic, be it ethnically, religiously, culturally, or in terms of gender and identity. In this reality, inclusion is essential for stability and progress.

One of the clearest examples of the benefits of inclusion is the economic empowerment of women. The Nordic countries have seen firsthand how gender equality fuels economic growth, sparks innovation, and strengthens social well-being. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), closing the gender gap in the labour market could boost GDP by trillions of dollars globally. Among the Nordics, high rates of female employment have driven growth and created some of the world's most equitable and prosperous societies.

Bangladesh, too, has made remarkable progress in women's education and workforce participation. Yet, challenges remain. Too many women and girls still face barriers to education, employment, and equal rights. Removing these barriers is an economic imperative and a matter of justice.

Women and girls still lack equal rights in many parts of the world; many are denied basic rights such as education, livelihood, inheritance, participation in family decisions, and choice of partner. We must work together for a future where equality is a reality.

"Inclusion" isn't just a buzzword. It involves other virtues like mutual understanding, compassion, and reconciliation. Ultimately, inclusion builds peace and solidarity—locally, regionally, and globally.

Religious minorities, numbering around 1.5 crores in Bangladesh, often face vulnerability and fear, especially in the face of radical elements. This fear must be addressed decisively so that all citizens feel secure. Constitutional reforms offer an opportunity to reinforce equality and non-discrimination for all—including ethnic minorities, marginalised communities, and gender minorities alike.

Bangladesh has undergone historic changes since July 2024. The people have asserted their sovereignty. Legal actions are underway against perpetrators of past crimes. Ensuring fair and impartial justice is a solemn duty—one that must be fulfilled with integrity. At the same time, reconciliation is vital.

The Nordic countries believe in democracy beyond elections: stakeholder participation, strong local governance, transparency, trust, and the right to peaceful protest. Bangladesh's upcoming democratic transition is a hopeful sign. Sustaining this progress requires dialogue over confrontation and a political culture rooted in respect for rights, peaceful transfer of power, and willingness to compromise.

Freedom of expression, media independence, good governance, accountability, justice, rule of law, and continuous dialogue are essential for any thriving democracy. Upholding human rights for all will remain at the heart of long-term Nordic commitment and closer cooperation with Bangladesh. Inclusive societies are fair, resilient, innovative, and built for the future. The Nordic countries will remain steadfast partners on this shared journey.

Three competing nationalisms and the battle for Bangladesh



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ASIF BIN ALI

When we speak about Bangladesh today, we often pretend as if there is one clear national story. In reality, three stories are competing to define who "we" are and are not. Islamic nationalism, Bangalee nationalism, and Bangladeshi nationalism are not just party slogans. These are three rival nationalist projects for imagining the country.

Nationalism seeks to align the state with a particular vision of the nation. Ernest Gellner describes it as the demand for a shared culture to have its own state. Benedict Anderson calls nations "imagined communities," where individuals feel connected through language, media, and shared practices, despite never having met. Eric Hobsbawm shows how many "ancient" traditions are actually modern inventions used to maintain power. At the same time, Anthony D. Smith argues that successful nations link modern citizenship to older myths and symbols. Taken together, nationalism is a project that constructs a community in people's minds, gives it a shared past and destiny, anchors it in state institutions, and usually identifies at least one threatening "other."

Measured by that lens, the three nationalisms of Bangladesh are three different ways of defining membership, memory, and enemies on the same land. Islamic nationalism is the oldest. Its roots go back to late colonial Bengal, long before Jamaat-e-Islami politics in the 1950s and 1970s. The partition of Bengal in 1905 and the founding of the All India Muslim League in Dhaka in 1906 created a new arena in which Muslim elites organised as a community they saw as vulnerable in a Hindu dominated political economy. Through the 1930s and 1940s, leaders such as A.K. Fazlul Huq, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, and even the then-young Sheikh Mujibur Rahman moved within this

wider Muslim frame, despite their differences. The "we" was the Muslim community; the reward was a state where Muslims would be safe and in charge; the implied enemy was "the Hindu."

The birth of Pakistan in 1947 looked like a clear victory. But the new state was split into West and East, separated by geography and culture. The central leadership tried to impose a single Muslim Pakistani identity, built around Islam and Urdu. In East Bengal, this project faced challenges and produced new tensions instead of harmony. In response, Bangalee nationalism emerged. With the language movement of 1952, the education movement of 1962, the Six Point Programme of 1966, and the mass uprising of 1969, a Bangalee political identity emerged that was no longer willing to be the submissive "eastern wing" of a Muslim Pakistan. That sentiment was transformed into an armed struggle with the Liberation War of 1971. The founding moment shifted from 1947 to 1971, and the enemy became the Pakistani military regime and its local collaborators.

The 1972 constitution tried to turn this experience into a state project. Nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism were announced as guiding principles. In theory, "Bangalee" was defined broadly. In practice, our version of nationalism was heavily majority culture centred, which left many Biharis, indigenous communities, and non-Bangla speakers at the margins.

Islamic nationalism did not vanish with Pakistan's defeat. In independent Bangladesh, Jamaat-e-Islami was banned, and religious politics were pushed back from the centre of power, but mosque networks, madrasa structures, and religious sentiments survived. Proponents of Islamic nationalism remained in the background, waiting for an opening. That opening came indirectly through a third

project: Bangladeshi nationalism.

After Mujib's assassination in 1975, General Ziaur Rahman became the president. Zia introduced "Bangladeshi nationalism" in his speeches and through constitutional changes. The focus moved from cultural Bangalee identity to a territorial Bangladeshi identity centred on citizenship. The "we" became those living within the borders of Bangladesh. The founding event remained

are fundamental differences between a territorial, citizenship-based project and a religious identity project.

When parliamentary democracy was restored in 1991, the script was more or less fixed. The Awami League carried the banner of Bangalee nationalism. The BNP projected itself as the guardian of Bangladeshi nationalism. It took a tougher line on India. Islamic parties, including a

crimes trials, and the counter-mobilisation by Hefazat-e-Islam, Bangladesh and other groups, brought Islamic identity to the centre of street politics again. The elections of 2014, 2018, and 2024 failed to receive public mandate. Therefore, public space for politics became narrow, leading to the opening up of room for alternative authorities. By August 5, 2024, Islamic nationalist currents had become a major force in the uprising.

Here lies the central problem. All three nationalisms are real, with genuine constituencies, histories, and grievances. None of them can wipe out the others, though it has been tried since our independence. Many Bangladeshi citizens carry elements of all three nationalisms at once: pride in Bangla, loyalty to Bangladesh as a state, and attachment to Islam. Parties also cross these lines for political reasons. In reality, nationalisms are messy in practice, even while elites try to turn them into clean, competing brands.

If we accept that none of these projects can be eliminated, the question changes. It no longer remains a question of which nationalism should win, but what kind of political order can keep the conflict from destroying the republic.

For Bangladesh, this moment demands a clear boundary between the battlefield of nationalisms and the machinery of the state. Parties can keep arguing over whether the country and nation are Islamic, Bangalee, or Bangladeshi, and over the meanings of 1947, 1971, and 2024. But certain things should stay out of this political fight. Elections have to be a peaceful way to change governments. Judges, bureaucrats, and the security forces must stay neutral and follow the law, not any political party. School books should be written and reviewed by credible authors and researchers. And every citizen must know they will get the same protection from the state, no matter their political inclination. These steps may not end the rivalry between the three nationalisms, but they will lower the risk of the destruction of the state. If institutions protect everyone and children grow up with openness to more than one version or interpretation of history, they will grow up to be less willing to hurt competitors. If we do not move in this direction, our national identity will keep dividing us, with graver consequences each time.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

the Liberation War of 1971, but it was reinterpreted less as an ethno-linguistic struggle and more as the birth of a sovereign state.

Bangladeshi nationalism, in a more generous version of history, could have produced a nationalism that respected multiple ethnicities and religions under one legal roof, while valuing 1971 as the founding moment of Bangladesh. That path, however, was never fully taken by the proponents of Bangladeshi nationalism. Party competition and regional geopolitics pulled Bangladeshi nationalism in another direction. It became the language of the BNP against the Awami League and often against India. Because of constitutional changes under Zia and later Ershad, Bangladeshi nationalism gradually came to be viewed by many as a softer cover for Islamic nationalism. However, there

relegalised Jamaat, spoke in the language of Islamic nationalism, turning grievances about secular elites, global politics, and war crimes trials into a call for a more openly Islamic state. Each project tried to install its own heroes, martyrs, and villains into the national calendar and the schoolbooks. The weaknesses of this arrangement were obvious. Every change of government also means a change in the national story; the state never becomes a neutral home for all its citizens. It becomes a prize to be captured so that one's own version of the nation can be declared official and others erased. The country has gone through constant reinvention of tradition to secure power.

The last decade has pushed this instability to its limits. Since 2013, the re-emergence of Islamic nationalism has been impossible to ignore. The Shahbagh protests around war

Rebutting the rebuttal: On inflation, unemployment, and the Phillips curve



OPEN SKY

Dr Birupaksha Paul
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BIRUPAKSHA PAUL

My article, "The interim has failed to curb inflation and unemployment," was published in *The Daily Star* on Dec 29, 2025. Dr Abdullah A Dewan has delivered a rebuttal to my writing, published on January 4, 2026. While Dr Dewan's theoretical belief is his own choice, his misinterpretation of my writing warrants my response. The rebuttal centres on the theory of the Phillips curve, which includes a typical trade-off between unemployment and inflation, suggesting that the task of lowering unemployment raises inflation and vice versa. The rebuttal says that I criticised the interim government for not being able to control both inflation and unemployment. And to make it happen, I advocated the application of the Phillips curve as the only mantra of salvation.

As Dr Dewan writes, my article "evaluates the interim government's economic performance primarily through the conventional inflation-unemployment trade-off, concluding that policy failure explains the persistence of both." He adds that my argument's analytical assumptions do not hold anymore, and that it also omits critical institutional realities. Although I started with the notion of the Phillips curve, suggesting that the central bank raised the policy rate to 10 percent to bring inflation down, I pointed out that this high interest rate is actually augmenting unemployment by discouraging private credit, whose growth has come down to six percent. Disappointingly, inflation is not coming down as designed. Then, I concluded that Bangladesh's current situation of high inflation and rising unemployment heralds the advent of stagflation—when the typical Phillips curve disappears.

Dr Dewan discards the Phillips curve as an old-style, mid-20th-century instrument. He seems to be unaware of the latest developments that fortified the curve's relevance in modern economics.

presenting credible evidence or numbers. However, I don't see any reason to slaughter the Phillips curve theory only for the sake of crediting the interim.

There is a plethora of research on whether the unemployment-inflation trade-off is active or not in peer-reviewed journals. Economists as a whole body of scholars didn't declare the demise of the Phillips curve, although Dr Dewan almost unilaterally sent the theory to the coffin by branding it an old, "obsolete" tool of the mid-20th century. I personally authored and co-authored papers in research journals on the existence of the Phillips curve, even in developing countries like Bangladesh and India.

In 1958, economist AW Phillips from the London School of Economics found a negative relationship between unemployment and wages after working on almost one hundred years' data from the UK. He himself didn't claim it as a theory. In the 1960s, Paul Samuelson and Robert Solow, two Nobel laureates, worked with American data and found the trade-off authentic. They first coined the term Phillips curve, which later drew enormous attention in economic policymaking. Even the Nobel laureate monetarist Milton Friedman made a powerful reconciliation of the theory by saying that although there is no permanent trade-off, there is always a temporary trade-off between inflation and unemployment. Robert Lucas and Edmund Phelps, two Nobel laureates, theorised the role of expectations, which are also pertinent to the model of the expectations-augmented Phillips curve or the New Keynesian Phillips curve.

The disappearance of the Phillips curve in the stagflation of the 1970s was due to the role of expectations and supply shocks, such as the fuel-price hikes. Thus, the Phillips curve is like a mountain, which may occasionally disappear from our typical eyesight due to clouds or dense fog. That is why George Akerlof, another Nobel laureate, commented, "Probably the single most important macroeconomic relationship is the Phillips curve."

Dr Dewan discards the Phillips curve as an old-style, mid-20th-century instrument. He seems to be unaware of the latest developments that fortified the curve's relevance in modern economics. The Harvard economist Gregory Mankiw asserted that three things have rejuvenated the Phillips curve to make it a modern policy tool: i) the replacement of wage inflation with price inflation; ii) the attachment of expectations or expected inflation, and finally iii) the inclusion of supply shocks.

The reason why we don't readily see this trade-off in developing countries is attributable to expectations, supply shocks,

institutional factors, and often data inaccuracies. When those factors are taken care of, the Phillips curve reappears. Sometimes, the selection of the right data series is important. For example, Nobel laureate Paul Krugman cautioned that we need to use wage inflation instead of price inflation to see the Phillips curve.

Dr Dewan complains that my article "omits critical institutional realities." The fourth paragraph of my article includes, "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." It appears that Dr Dewan didn't carefully go through my whole article before orchestrating a criticism of my theoretical reference to the Phillips curve.

The flipside of the Phillips curve, the Lucas supply function—which shows a positive relationship between output and inflation—has a strong micro foundation in the rising disutility of work. Thus, the Phillips curve is not just a statistical accident; it is deeply ingrained in human psychology of accepting low wages

when unemployment in society is high and bargaining for higher wages when unemployment is low. Recent research by the Federal Reserve of Chicago showed that while the Phillips curve for the US almost flattened in the pre-pandemic period, it again reemerged and steepened in the post-Covid era. Thus, despite changes in the slope of the Phillips curve, it stays there as long as human psychology preserves order and rationality. That is why the Phillips-curve trade-off theory is a tremendously powerful companion that policymakers devotedly treasure in their toolbox.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department (EED)
Chuadanga.
<https://eed.chuadanga.gov.bd>

E-Tender Notice No : 37.07.1800.009.00.001.26-011

Date: 07-01-2026 Eng.

e-Tender Notice

E-Tender (OTM) is invited in the e-GP System Portal for the procurement of following works details are given below.

Tender Document last selling Date and Time : 03-Feb-2026 12:30
Tender Closing & Opening (Date & Time): 03-Feb-2026 14:30

Sl. No	Tender ID	Description of Works
01	1190163	Construction Of 6-Storied Administrative Building With 6-Storied Foundation Including Sanitary And Water Supply Works Along With Electrification And Other Works At Chuadanga Polytechnic Institute In Damurhuda Upazila Under Chuadanga District.
02	1190164	Construction Of 6-Storied Academic Building With 6-Storied Foundation Including Sanitary And Water Supply Works Along With Electrification And Other Works Chuadanga Polytechnic Institute In Damurhuda Upazila Under Chuadanga District.
03	1190165	Construction Of 6-Storied Workshop Building With 6-Storied Foundation In/c. Sanitary, Water Supply & Electrification Works At Chuadanga Polytechnic Institute In Damurhuda Upazila Under Chuadanga District.

This is an online Tender. Where only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registers Banks branches up to above mentioned date & time. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

2026-01-03
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Armeen
Musa weds
Saqeb
Mahbub

Composer and singer Armeen Musa has announced her marriage to Saqeb Mahbub, with the wedding taking place on February 22, 2025. The artiste shared moments from the celebration on social media on December 29. Speaking to The Daily Star, Musa said the wedding festivities were held across three cities – Hong Kong, London and Dhaka; reflecting the couple's personal and family ties. The intimate gatherings blended music, dance and poetry, including *Sangama*, a special production conceived by Musa with her band and choir.

Armeen Musa is widely known for her work across music, theatre and interdisciplinary performance, and is the founder of the Ghaashphoring Choir. She is also the first Bangladeshi composer-singer to receive a Grammy nomination. Saqeb Mahbub is a barrister, Supreme Court lawyer and partner at Mahbub & Company, with an international legal practice and notable public interest work.

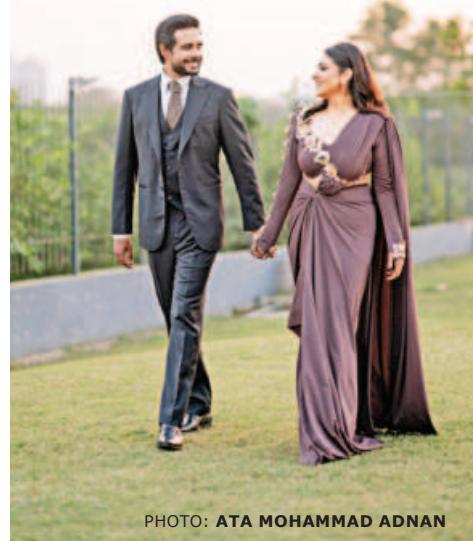


PHOTO: ATA MOHAMMAD ADNAN

Good work is what ultimately sustains an artiste:
Bidya Sinha Mim

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

National Film Award-winning actress Bidya Sinha Mim began her film career with Humayun Ahmed's *Amar Ache Jol*. Over the years, she has delivered several acclaimed performances at home and abroad, including projects in Indian Bengali cinema and on OTT platforms.

On January 4, the actress marked her fourth wedding anniversary. In a candid conversation with The Daily Star, she spoke about love, travel and her plans for the year ahead.

Four years of marriage already – how does it feel?

It feels wonderful. I honestly don't know how four years passed so quickly; it feels like yesterday. With everyone's love and blessings, we're doing well. There was no big celebration; we spent time with our family, and that was enough for me.

Did your husband plan anything special?

Yes, he's promised to take me on a trip. He said, "Wherever you want to go, I'll take you." Now I'm deciding where that should be. That promise itself feels like a beautiful surprise.

You've just returned from the Maldives. What was it like?

I love the sea, and the Maldives always feels special. We've travelled together before, but last month's trip was particularly refreshing; long walks by the shore, conversations, and simply enjoying the blue of the ocean.

You've returned to the set with 'Malik'. What can you tell us about the project so far?

I'd rather not say much right now. The director will speak at the right time. All I can confirm is that shooting has begun. The film is directed by Saif Chandan, and Arifin Shuvoo is my co-star.

There's also an upcoming OTT project...

I'll be doing a web film for Chorki. That's coming up soon. I'm also reading new scripts and choosing projects carefully.

What are you hoping to deliver this year?

I want to present audiences with quality work; stories I believe in and that audiences will enjoy. Those are the kinds of projects I want to be part of, works that appeal to everyone.

Your long-term dream as an actor?

I have just one dream – to do good work. I want to move forward with meaningful projects. At the end of the day, it is good work that sustains an artiste, and that is the path I am following. Over the years, several acclaimed and talked-about films have been added to my career. I hope to continue doing films of that calibre in the future as well.



Oscars shortlist 15 films for Int'l Feature category

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has shortlisted 15 films for the International Feature Film category, narrowing submissions from 86 countries and regions ahead of the next round of voting. The final nominations will be announced on January 22.

The shortlist spans five continents, underscoring the category's global reach. Selected titles include *Belen* (Argentina), *The Secret Agent* (Brazil), *It Was Just an Accident* (France), *Sound of Falling* (Germany), *Homebound* (India), *The President's Cake* (Iraq), *Kokuhō* (Japan), *All That's Left of You* (Jordan), *Sentimental Value* (Norway), *Palestine 36* (Palestine), *No Other Choice* (South Korea), *Sirat* (Spain), *Late Shift* (Switzerland), *Left-Handed Girl* (Taiwan) and *The Voice of Hind Rajab* (Tunisia).

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Shunyo Abhirup'

Presented alongside this year's festival, this group exhibition explores how absence transforms into artistic expression. Curated by Lutfa Mahmuda, the show brings together diverse contemporary voices, turning



emptiness into form, thought, and visual resonance within a reflective and immersive gallery setting.

Date: Friday-Saturday | January 9-17, 2026

Time: 5 pm onwards

Venue: Bangladesh Military Museum

NEWS

'Level-playing field is still absent'

FROM PAGE 12

candidates Abdul Awal Mintoo of Feni and Abdul Malek of Sylhet, among around 12 to 13 such candidates, fall into this category. Some of their nominations were accepted. However, in a similar case, the nomination of Jamaat's Kurigram candidate Mahbub Salehin was not accepted. Jamaat has drawn the Election Commission's attention to this issue, he added.

Referring to another incident, he said that during the Awami League regime, three Jamaat leaders were unlawfully punished in a case. While the nomination papers of two of them were accepted, that of Jamaat candidate AHM Hamidur Rahman Azad was rejected.

"There are two different decisions in the same country; two different interpretations of the same law. We have informed the Election Commission of this and lodged our protest."

He said the reason is that partisan DCs have been appointed in various places, and they have made decisions from a party perspective rather than in

accordance with the law. "We have said such DCs and SPs must be removed and neutral DCs and SPs must be appointed in their places."

Asked whether Jamaat submitted any list to the EC seeking the removal of partisan DCs and SPs, he said they did not.

Taher said Jamaat informed the EC that a level playing field was currently absent, alleging that one party was receiving disproportionate promotion and media coverage. "We have urged initiatives to ensure equal election campaigning."

He claimed that selective security and protocol for certain individuals create public perceptions of favoritism, undermining the electoral fairness.

"If one person is given a lot of protocol, people may get the impression that he may become something in the future, which is damaging the level playing field. An attempt is being made to send a wrong message to the public. We have drawn attention to this matter."

Emphasising equality, the Jamaat leader said all major political parties

must receive the same treatment in terms of protection, protocol, and related matters.

Calling for a fair election with an equal level playing field, he said, "If the upcoming election is held in this kind of arranged manner, Bangladesh will face an existential crisis and the country will move towards an even more dangerous situation."

Meanwhile, Election Commissioner Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah said the 13th national election is like bringing a derailed train back on track, adding that the EC's task is to restore momentum in the electoral process.

Speaking at a programme on citizen election observation in Dhaka, he said the EC faced difficulties in registering local observer organisations, as many failed to perform their duties properly during the last three controversial polls.

12-yr-old's body

FROM PAGE 2

her body hanging from the bamboo ceiling of their home and sent it to Chattogram Medical College Hospital for an autopsy. A dark bruise was found around her neck during the inquest, but there were no other injury marks.

"We are waiting for the post-mortem report to know whether it was a homicide or a death by suicide."

An unnatural death case was filed by the victim's maternal uncle, Rana Das, on Sunday, he added.

The incident came to light after a photo of the girl circulated on social media over the past two days.

The victim lived with her mother and younger brother in a one-room rented house on the ground floor of a building in the Panik Tanki Pahar area. The father lives on the KEPZ premises and visits the family once or twice a month.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, the mother, Rosy Ghosh, said, "My children usually stay at my father-in-law's house near our home from morning to night, as my husband and I work. That night, my daughter was at her grandmother's house and returned home alone around 10:00pm while I was at work."

"Around half an hour later, my father-in-law brought our son home and found the door ajar. When he opened it, he saw Srabanti hanging. I rushed home immediately after receiving his call."

"Srabanti's feet were still planted on the bed – something that would not have been the case if it were a suicide."

"My daughter was just a minor; she didn't even know what suicide was."

Pakistan eyes

FROM PAGE 12

On Tuesday, Pakistan's defence minister said the success of its weapons industry could transform the country's economic outlook.

"Our aircraft have been tested, and we are receiving so many orders that Pakistan may not need the International Monetary Fund in six months," Khawaja Asif told broadcaster Geo News.

Taher's current holdings include non-agricultural land and buildings valued at Tk 1 crore (acquisition cost Tk 22.16 lakh), and movable assets declared at Tk 1 crore, including Tk

Labour migration up 12%

FROM PAGE 12

The report links the decline to unsafe working conditions, violence against women workers abroad, negative media narratives and conservative social attitudes that discourage women from working outside the home.

Professional and highly skilled workers make up only 3 to 4 percent of total migration.

Weak training quality, a lack of international recognition of skills, budget shortages, vacant trainer positions and a lack of interest from recruiting agencies are identified as major barriers to skill-based migration, the report said.

RMMRU criticised the budget for fiscal 2025-26, which reduced allocations for the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry.

Despite recommendations to increase migration sector funding, the budget allocation declined from the previous year, with most funds again focused on infrastructure rather than worker protection and services.

The report also raised alarm over irregular migration and migrant

deaths.

Between January and early October 2025, more than 15,000 Bangladeshi migrants arrived in Italy by sea, the highest among all nationalities.

This figure is nearly double that of the previous year, showing that dangerous migration routes remain active despite stricter border controls.

Several key developments in 2025 were discussed in the report.

For the first time, Bangladeshi migrants abroad were allowed to vote through a postal voting system using a mobile application called Postal Vote BD.

By the end of December 2025, more than 1.5 million migrants had registered for postal voting, marking a historic step toward political inclusion of migrant workers.

RMMRU called for urgent reforms to ensure good governance in the migration sector.

Key recommendations include increasing the national budget for migration, reducing the number of recruiting agencies, strengthening skill training and international recognition, ensuring women's safety

in migration, digitising recruitment and certification systems, and holding agencies accountable for fraud and excessive fees.

Addressing the event, renowned photographer Shahidul Alam criticised corruption in recruitment agencies and Bangladeshi embassies abroad, calling them "centres of exploitation".

Migrants are forced to pay bribes even inside embassies through brokers, while basic facilities are denied to them.

He further pointed out that thousands of migrant workers' bodies return home every year, leaving families unable even to afford burial costs.

Stressing the need for structural reform, he said laws will not change unless decision-making shifts away from vested interests, and he demanded easier voting access for migrants, including a digital method.

"Those who shed blood for change rarely benefit from it. The benefits go to those in power, not the people who built this country with their labour," he said.

Sarwar earns

FROM PAGE 12

one as "researcher".

According to the affidavit, Sarwar, who earns Tk 3.40 lakh a year, paid zero income tax as the income fell below the taxable threshold of Tk 3.5 lakh.

While his affidavit lists Tk 3 lakh as his sole asset, his tax return for fiscal 2025-26 shows a net wealth of Tk 2.20 lakh.

In the affidavit, the columns for spouse and dependents were left blank.

Sarwar also declared that he has no liabilities or loans and has never been accused in any criminal case.

Mitu has movable assets

FROM PAGE 12

owns no agricultural or non-agricultural land.

According to the affidavit, the couple's combined movable assets amount to Tk 1.27 crore – Tk 74.31 lakh held by Mitu and Tk 53.42 lakh by her husband.

Mitu paid zero income tax in fiscal 2025-26 as her income of Tk 3 lakh a year was below the taxable threshold of Tk 3.5 lakh. Her husband, who earns Tk 8.49 lakh annually, paid Tk 31,457 in income tax.

Her tax return shows net wealth of

Tk 28.40 lakh, while her affidavit lists assets worth Tk 74.31 lakh.

In the affidavit, Mitu stated that she has never been accused in any criminal case and has no loans.

In her election expenditure statement to the EC, Mitu said that she expects to spend Tk 5 lakh from her own earnings and another Tk 3 lakh from her husband.

She also mentioned receiving Tk 9.9 lakh from six individuals who are not her relatives, and another Tk 7.1 lakh through crowdfunding.

Shishir Manir declares Tk 1.12cr asset

FROM PAGE 12

legal practice and paid Tk 11.43 lakh in tax. During the same period, his wife earned Tk 89.27 lakh and paid Tk 19.82 lakh in tax.

According to the affidavit, Sumaiya receives an annual salary of around Tk 65 lakh from her job. Shishir Monir earned Tk 96,593 in bank dividends last fiscal, while his wife received Tk 20.87 lakh from the same source.

The affidavit further shows that Shishir Manir has Tk 9.52 lakh in cash, while his wife holds Tk 9.94 lakh. He

has only Tk 2,300 deposited in his bank account, whereas his wife has bank savings amounting to Tk 38.26 lakh.

Sumaiya also has investments worth Tk 91.90 lakh in savings certificates and fixed deposits.

Shishir Monir declared 25 bhoris of gold jewellery which he received in gifts. His wife on the other hand declared gold ornaments worth Tk 5 lakh.

The value of Shishir Manir's declared movable assets stands at around Tk 51 lakh, compared to Tk 1.95 crore worth of movable assets owned

by his wife.

Although the Jamaat candidate declared no immovable assets in his affidavit, his tax return shows that he holds immovable property worth Tk 7.55 lakh. Sumaiya owns nearly two acres of non-agricultural land valued at Tk 1.81 crore.

Shishir Manir, his wife and their children have no outstanding liabilities, according to the affidavit.

He faces two cases, one under investigation and another stayed by the High Court.

Mercury dips further

FROM PAGE 3

The bone chilling cold has largely paralysed daily life and livelihoods of low-income and marginalised people, especially those in shoal areas, affecting children, the elderly, and women the most.

Sukhchan Khatun, 45, a day labourer from Char Hatia area under Kurigram's Ulipur upazila, said, "We neither have warm clothes, nor the money to buy them from

the market. There is no work, no income for the past week amid the cold. We are barely surviving."

Kurigram district relief and rehabilitation officer Abdul Matin said a total of 25,000 blankets allocated to the district is currently being distributed.

"However, the total demand in the district is around 1,50,000 blankets. A letter has been sent to the ministry seeking more allocation," he added.

Law enforcers

FROM PAGE 3

battalions will operate as mobile and striking forces to maintain law and order in the electoral areas.

Of these, BGB, RAB, APBN, and Ansar battalions will work on a district, upazila, and police station-based arrangement, while the Coast Guard will remain responsible for coastal areas.

The circular stated that all forces will report to the returning officers and carry out their duties in

line with their instructions and advice. If necessary, mobile and strike teams may be reorganised.

Four armed police members will be deployed at important points in metropolitan areas, while three armed police members will be deployed at each important point in non-metropolitan areas. Three armed police members will also be deployed at key locations in special areas (hilly and remote regions).

2 sent to jail over rape

FROM PAGE 3

produced before a court that sent them to jail yesterday.

Locals said the arrestees were former members of Mohammadpur upazila unit of Students Against Discrimination (SAD).

SAD's Magura district unit general

secretary Mohammad Hossain confirmed their membership but said the committee was dissolved last year.

The victim was sent to a hospital for medical tests. Police are trying to arrest the other accused, said the OC.

Tarique

FROM PAGE 3

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, July martyr Abu Sayed, the late Taiyaba Majumder, and others killed during the July uprising and the long democratic struggle.

He will also attend prayer programmes and meet injured July fighters and their families.

Party leaders said this will be Tarique's first visit to his ancestral home in Bogura in 19 years.

In the upcoming 13th national election, Tarique will contest from Bogura-6 (Sadar) and Dhaka-17 constituencies.

According to a press release, the tour will focus solely on religious and social activities, including grave visits and prayer programmes, and that the Election Commission's code of conduct will be strictly followed.

In a letter signed by ABM Abdus Sattar, private secretary to the acting chairman, DCs and ROs of Dhaka, Gazipur, Tangail, Sirajganj, Bogura, Gaibandha, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, and Kurigram were notified of the programme.

Meanwhile, Chinese Ambassador to Dhaka Yao Wen met Tarique Rahman yesterday at the party chairperson's Gulshan office.

July

FROM PAGE 3

conference at Madhur Canteen on Dhaka University campus, Rashid warned that abandoning the July fighters for electoral politics would be a grave mistake.

Rashid announced a set of demands, including: unconditional release of Mahdi and Surovi; forming a probe body for punishing Omar Faruk and other police and administrative officials; issuance of an ordinance by the president within next 24 hours granting immunity for all activities carried out by July fighters between

Unimaginable

FROM PAGE 3

bodies buried at Rayerbazar in Dhaka during the July mass uprising.

The Criminal Investigation Department formally handed the report over to the CA at his residence Jamuna.

"For those who are still waiting for news of their loved ones, this process is a ray of hope – one day the truth will come to light," he said.

The DNA sample collection took place between December 7 and December 27.

So far, nine families searching for missing relatives have submitted DNA samples. Of them, the identities of eight martyrs

July 1 and August 8, 2024; and documentation of significant contributions of armed and paramilitary forces personnel and civil administration officials during the uprising; immediate promotions and appointments to sensitive and important posts for armed forces officers who were deprived and repressed after February 25, 2009.

He also announced a set of programmes, including: preparing a list of police personnel under whose jurisdictions protesters were killed during the uprising; submitting the

list to the International Crimes Tribunal and file cases accordingly and holding discussions with the law and home advisers to ensure the issuance of an "indemnity ordinance" by the president.

July fighters abandoned by NCP

FROM PAGE 3

Bangladesh's sovereignty was also under threat.

Referring to the previous Awami League government, he said justice must be ensured and urged the government to take steps to hold India accountable in international courts.

Put an end to border

9

July fighters abandoned by NCP

FROM PAGE 3

stopped the march with barricades near Banshitala around 4:20pm.

NCP Senior Joint Convener Ariful Islam Adib said Felani was not the only victim of border violence and claimed that

Bangladesh's sovereignty was also under threat.

Referring to the previous Awami League government, he said justice must be ensured and urged the government to take steps to hold India accountable in international courts.



Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212 Web: www.powergrid.gov.bd

Ref- 27.21.0000.101.06.001.26.147

Date: 07 January 2026

General Information to the Shareholders on 29th AGM

The 29th Annual General Meeting of the shareholders of Power Grid Bangladesh PLC will be held on 24 January 2026, Saturday, at 10:00 am in a hybrid format (physical and digital) at the Company's Head Office Auditorium, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Dhaka.

This is for the kind information of all our valued shareholders that we already have sent the Annual Report 2024-2025 in soft/pdf copy, comprising Annual Audited Financial Statements, Management's Discussion and Analysis, report or certificate on compliance of the Corporate Governance Code and Directors' Report, along with the notice of the 29th AGM etc. to you through your email addresses as recorded in Beneficial Owner (BO) accounts with the depository.

The Annual Report 2024-2025 is also available on the Company's website at www.powergrid.gov.bd

You are warmly requested to join the AGM in person at the venue or connect virtually with the link: <https://powergrid29agm.hybridagm.net>

The notification is published in compliance with the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission's Notification No.: BSEC/CMRCD/2006-158/2008/Admin/81, dated 20 June 2018.

N.B.: In compliance with BSEC Notification No.: SEC/SRMI/2000-953/1950, dated: 24 October 2000 and এসবিসি/সিএমআরসিভি/১০০৯-১১৩/১৫৪ তারিখ: ২৪ অক্টোবর ২০১৩, the company will not provide any gifts/gift coupons/gift boxes/food/food coupons/food boxes at the forthcoming 29th AGM.

Md. Jahangir Azad
Company Secretary



বাংলাদেশ সুগারক্রপ গবেষণা ইনসিটিউট
স্ট্রীল-৬৬২০, পাবনা।

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

তারিখ- ০৮/০১/২০২৬ খ্রি

নং- বিএসআরআই/এন-১/২০২৬/৮২৫

বাংলাদেশ সুগারক্রপ গবেষণা ইনসিটিউট (বিএসআরআই), স্ট্রীল, পাবনা এর রাজস্বাধীরের নিয়ন্ত্রিত শূন্য পদসমূহে আস্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে নিয়োগের জন্য

বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে প্রযোজ্য করা যাচ্ছে:-

১. সুগারক্রপ প্রক্রিয়ার মধ্যে আবেদন করতে হবে যা আবেদনকারীর বয়স ১৮/০১/২০২৬ তারিখে থেকে ৩০ বছরের মধ্যে থাকতে হবে।

২. সুগারক্রপ প্রক্রিয়ার মধ্যে আবেদন করতে হবে যা আবেদনকারীর বয়স ১৮/০১/২০২৬ তারিখে থেকে ৩০ বছরের মধ্যে থাকতে হবে।

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১০. সুগারক্রপ প্রক্রিয়ার মধ্যে আবেদন করতে হবে যা আবেদনকারীর বয়স ১৮/০১/২০২৬ তারিখে থেকে ৩০ বছরের মধ্যে থাকতে হবে।

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THE SHELF

6 books that I read at the end of last year... I hated 5 of them

Once that section ended though, the prose really lost steam for me. The pacing started to get swampy and the narrative tried to be many things at once. The Brexit commentary felt wedged in like a random aside, and the "prison" interview chapters which were written as breathless, unbroken monologues made it tough to keep track of all the characters and tangents.

ARSHI IBSAN RADIFAH

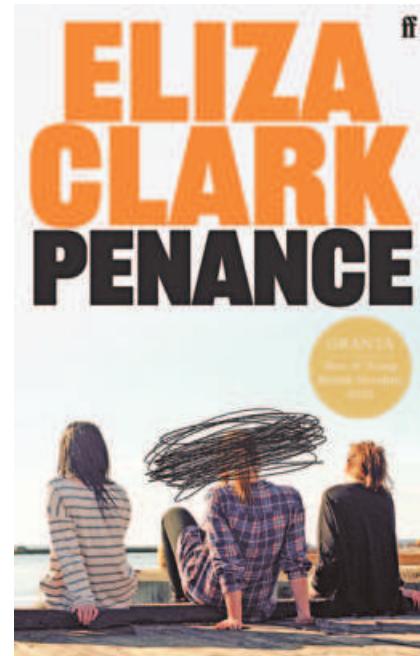
You know that feeling when you crack open a new book and you're convinced that this is the knight in all its paperback shining armour that will save you from your reading slump? Yeah. Well. I went six rounds with my TBR in December 2025 and walked away with exactly one survivor: *All's Well* (Simon & Schuster, 2021) by Mona Awad (bless her bizarre, slippery mind).

The rest? Collateral damage.

There are too many lists on the internet pretending to know me better than I know myself. Everywhere I turn, it's: If you liked X, you'll adore Y! Google anything, no matter how vague, and suddenly 12 different websites materialise like salespeople at a department store.

So in the spirit of gentle rebellion (or really just because I feel so duped and tired after this ordeal) I decided to curate my own little anti-list of sorts. Instead of a Booktok-blessed, algorithm-approved list of what you should read next, this is a list of books I absolutely *did not enjoy*.

Penance
Eliza Clark
Faber & Faber, 2023

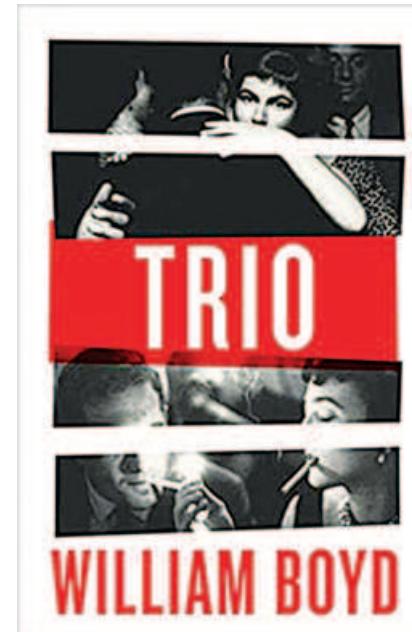


I went into *Penance* with real hope. The premise is incredible—a true-crime-style investigation into a teenage murder told through the eyes of a disgraced journalist trying to repair his reputation. The novel is framed as a nonfiction, complete with podcast transcriptions and interviews with the family. It really fits the eerie intimacy of the way we consume true crime these

days, especially with the in-universe "history" section; I remember stopping to Google fictional towns like an idiot because Clark made them feel real enough to check for Wikipedia pages.

Once that section ended though, the prose really lost steam for me. The pacing started to get swampy and the narrative tried to be many things at once. The Brexit commentary felt wedged in like a random aside, and the "prison" interview chapters which were written as breathless, unbroken monologues made it tough to keep track of all the characters and tangents. I understand that it was a stylistic choice but the payoff fell flat, and for a 300-plus page count, I really wanted it to be more of the book I was promised when I started it.

Trio
William Boyd
Viking, 2020

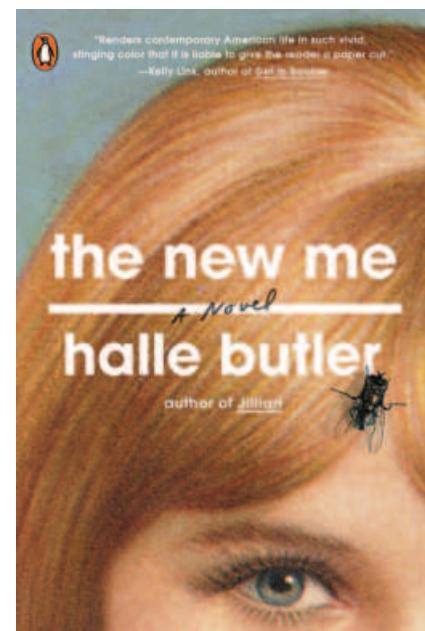


'Behind the scenes of a failing film production' is my Achilles heel and William Boyd is one of those writers I've been hearing about for years—a very British, very 'masterful' author that everyone speaks highly of. So, of course I picked *Trio*—a behind-the-scenes dramedy about the making of a film in 1968 where the titular trio features an alcoholic novelist desperate to start her newest book (Elfrida Wing), a closeted film producer living a double-life (Talbot Kydd), and an actress on the brink of stardom (Anny Viklund). This is exactly the sort of ensemble, showbiz-adjacent character study I love watching on a screen, which means reading it immediately makes it a hundred times better.

It started out promising as well. It

had everything you expected (artistic failure, terrorism panic, the queer loneliness of the '60s) and then some (the looming shadow of organised crime with estranged ex-husbands showing up outside hotels and cameramen stealing film rolls for their own illegal side-projects). There are many genuinely interesting conflicts throughout but the execution really falls flat. Boyd just scratches the surface and pulls away, every crisis dissolved into the next scene far too quickly. It's 350-something pages of gentle shuffling, especially after you are through the first two parts of the book. Elfrida Wing absolutely carried the book on her fragile, alcoholic shoulders for me. I kept turning pages mostly out of loyalty to her arc, otherwise I wouldn't even have gotten through the book.

The New Me
Halle Butler
Penguin, 2019



Not to be petty but my first thought once I finished this book was, "Didn't Ottessa Moshfegh do this already?" *The New Me* is basically 200 pages of a woman hating her job, her boss, her life, and herself—and that can be good when done right, but this one cycled around the same internal monologues like one single, baritone note held indefinitely. I don't mind an unhinged, miserable narrator but Millie really lacked the charisma. Butler nailed some of the specific details of temp-work life, and there are a few snappy one-liners that I underlined but otherwise I was restlessly skimming through to finish this book.

Then again, I'm fortunately not

(yet) stuck in a desk-job I absolutely loathe, so maybe if I read this again during an existential crisis when I'm trapped in my own horrible job, I'd find enlightenment. For now, I'd rather read something else.

We All Want Impossible Things
Catherine Newman
Harper, 2022



A woman caring for her lifelong best friend during her final days of ovarian cancer—I went in expecting a tender, grown-up novel about grief, and to come out of it a bit wrecked in the way good grief books often leave you devastated.

But Ashley, our protagonist, is difficult in all the wrong ways. Even though she is the one caring for her friend, Edi, in hospice, she hijacks every emotional beat and is one of the most exasperating protagonists I've encountered in a long time. I cannot imagine a world where your best friend is dying of ovarian cancer, and you, one of her primary caregivers, somehow is able to make it all about yourself. I kept wanting to reach into the book and shake her by the shoulders.

What's wild is that Newman seems like she knows this—there is a part where Edi literally tells Ash not to make the eulogy "all about herself". The writing is also incredibly choppy, every paragraph read like four different conversations happening at once.

Everything You'll Ever Need (You Can Find Within Yourself)
Charlotte Freeman
Thought Catalog Books, 2020

And finally, I have saved the best for last, my piece de resistance, the one

Goodreads has sitting at a whopping 4.1, which made me stare at my screen for a full minute wondering if I bought the right book, because, surely, something had gone wrong.

Charlotte Freeman's book is marketed like a raw, honest, vulnerable debut but this is actually a self-help book written in short, Instagram-ready affirmations that feel like the captions under wellness influencer reels. I'm not kidding. Every page is a fortune cookie: "Choose yourself." "Live with purpose." "Wake up and make the best of your short time on earth." And that's all. I get that sometimes people genuinely need to read those words but when you are expecting people to pay money for said "advice" it has to be better than this, especially when you can just whisper all 200 pages of advice to yourself, in the mirror, for free. I kept flipping the pages hoping for some kind of a narrative or a

Everything
You'll Ever
Need
Within Yourself
Charlotte Freeman

fresh angle, anything resembling craft and it never arrived. "Life is too damn short to live in a mediocre way." Yes! Okay! Sure! Now what? Nothing here feels earned, or even edited.

This was, hands down, the worst book I've read in years. If this helps someone in crisis, more power to you. But as a reading experience? Absolutely not.

Arshi Ibsan Radifah is a Literature major who loves unreliable narrators and Wes Anderson movie sets. If she had it her way she would have liked to play bass for a girl band in the 90s, but for now she'll suffice by rewatching Empire Records.

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

Love letters written in zero gravity

Review of 'Atmosphere: A Love Story' (Ballantine Books, 2025) by Taylor Jenkins Reid

JONAH KENT RICHARDS

Like many American kids who grew up between 1981 and 2011, I dreamed of becoming an astronaut and orbiting the Earth in a Space Shuttle. I read and watched everything I could about the different spacecraft and astronauts. So, I was intrigued when American novelist Taylor Jenkins Reid published her 2025 historical novel, *Atmosphere: A Love Story* about two of the first American women to join the astronaut corps and fly aboard the space shuttle. While the novel frames itself as a sapphic romance set to the backdrop of space, the story is better read as a love letter to these glass-ceiling-breaking astronauts. It is striking how closely the novel's protagonist resembles Sally Ride, the first American woman to fly into space. Reid does a skillful job exploring these women's battles with sexism and homophobia. The one area where Reid could have gone further was in exploring NASA's role in her fictional depiction of an explosion on the shuttle *Navigator*, which was clearly modelled after the 1986 tragedy.

The story centred around astronomer Joan Goodwin. She left her professorship at Rice University in the late 1970s to join the astronaut corps just as it was beginning to open to women and people of color for the new shuttle programme. Reid describes Joan hearing about an actual 1977 recruitment commercial starring Star Trek actress Nichelle Nichols targeting women and racial minorities. "This is your NASA, a space agency embarked on a mission to improve the quality of life on planet Earth

right now." A romantic and an idealist, this language spoke directly to Joan's core identity. She had been trying to touch the stars ever since she was a little girl. For Joan, humanity and the universe are inherently interconnected. She argues that humans as a species are custom built to explore the stars. Reid writes in her 'Author's Note' that she hopes Joan will inspire her readers to look up at the stars in wonder.

Despite Joan's idealism, Reid doesn't shy away from the real challenges that she and the other women astronauts faced.

Some members of the all-male, military pilot section of the astronaut corps bristled at the women's presence. Joan and the other women had to endure comments about their resiliency and a string of barely veiled sexual innuendos. While most of the women in Joan's group chose to ignore the comments or even laugh at them for fear of showing weakness, Joan directly



confronted anyone she perceived as making a sexist comment or action. Nor does Joan deny feeling the weight of the intense public scrutiny that she and the other women faced. Joan and her colleagues discussed among themselves how if anything went wrong on Ride's history-making flight, she would be blamed and future missions involving women could be set back. Reid rightly reminds her readers of the many obstacles that these first American women astronauts had to overcome and the pressure that they felt from the historical precedent-setting nature of their missions.

Reid brings much deserved attention to the presence and contributions of members of the LGBTQ+ community amongst the first women astronauts and the unspoken

but very real discrimination they faced. Joan falls in love with fellow astronaut Vanessa Ford. While Joan is initially unaware of her own sexuality, she is drawn to Vanessa and the two share an unspoken attraction. Their relationship starts as a friendship before blossoming into a full-blown romance.

Joan and Vanessa lived under the constant fear of being outed and potentially losing their jobs. At the time, NASA considered same sex relationships a security risk, potentially exposing employees to blackmail. The two women are forced to recognise the fact that if they continue their relationship, they risk their careers. Reid captures the dilemma of queer astronauts. Reid herself famously kept her sexual orientation hidden from the public until

her death in 2012; when she announced her partnership with Tam O'Shaughnessy in her obituary—the first coming out of a NASA astronaut.

Another aspect that feels underexplored is Reid's portrayal of a fictional 1984 satellite explosion aboard the shuttle *Navigator*, which killed or incapacitated everyone onboard except for Ford. The accident was clearly inspired by the Space Shuttle Challenger tragedy that happened in 1986, where a malfunction in one of the shuttle's solid rocket boosters led to an explosion that destroyed the spacecraft, killing the entire crew. Reid portrays the *Navigator* explosion as a random accident that couldn't have been predicted. However, a presidential commission determined that NASA's decision to launch Challenger in cold temperatures was flawed and unknowingly went against the advice of the contractors who built the solid rocket boosters. I would have liked Reid to explore any role that NASA may have played in the explosion.

Ultimately, I enjoyed reading about Joan's journey to become an astronaut and the evolution of her relationship with Vanessa. The novel offers a unique window into the experiences of the first generation of women in the astronaut corps and the various challenges that they faced. I just wish Reid had gone deeper in exploring NASA's role in the *Navigator* explosion.

Jonah Kent Richards is a Shakespeare screen adaptation scholar, an English teacher, and contributor for Star Books and Literature.

Nasir shows he still has the power

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Former national cricketer Nasir Hossain showed that he is far from finished as he smashed a career-best unbeaten 90 off 50 balls to help Dhaka Capitals end their three-match losing streak in BPL 12 with a seven-wicket win over Noakhali Express in Sylhet yesterday.

Nasir, who served a two-year ICC ban for breaching the Emirates Cricket Board's Anti-Corruption Code during the 2020-21 Abu Dhabi T10 League, returned to competitive cricket in April last year. This season also marks his return to the BPL after two years.

The 34-year-old, who played 19 Tests, 65 ODIs and 31 T20Is for Bangladesh between 2011 and 2018 and was often in the spotlight for controversies, had already shown form in the recent National Cricket League (NCL) T20. He scored 176 runs in eight innings and took six wickets, including a match-winning 46 off 31 balls in the final. This helped Rangpur Division clinch back-to-back titles.

That performance earned him a BPL contract worth Tk 18 lakh, but he struggled initially, managing only 41 runs in his first three matches while battling lower down the order.

Yesterday, Dhaka promoted him to number

three while chasing 134, and Nasir grabbed the chance brilliantly. His fluent knock, decorated with 14 fours and two sixes, took Dhaka to victory in just 14.1 overs and revived their playoff hopes.

The promotion followed Dhaka resting national batter Saif Hassan, who had scored only 26 runs in four innings. Nasir ensured the team did not regret the decision.

After the match, Nasir admitted national players usually get batting priority but said he had no complaints.

"We have players from the current World Cup squad. Their priority is always higher, and they're given positions they prefer," he said. "It's not unfair. They're in the national team because they are better. Even then, local players still get opportunities."

"If strict priority existed, maybe Saif would bowl instead of me. From my perspective, everything is fine, and the balance is good."

Nasir also expressed his preference for batting in the powerplay. "With only two fielders outside the circle, scoring becomes easier if you take risks. After that, it gets tougher, so I enjoy batting then," he said, adding that he hopes to continue playing for another five to six years if fitness allows.



Jacob Bethell fulfilled his rich potential in front of his family with a chanceless maiden Test century on Wednesday, as England built a fragile 119-run second-innings lead with two wickets remaining to give themselves a glimmer of hope in the final Ashes Test against hosts Australia. At the end of day four at the Sydney Cricket Ground, England had reached 302-8 with Bethell imperious on 142 not out and number 10 Matthew Potts yet to score. "I haven't really had time to kind of reflect on it... But to do that and have the family there was very special," Bethell said. England are desperate for another morale-boosting win after victory in the previous Test at Melbourne. Australia lead 3-1 and have already retained the Ashes.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Sylhet hub set up, but long road awaits BCB

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Sylhet

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) launched its first regional office in Sylhet on January 3, marking a significant step towards decentralisation and grassroots cricket development, although several key operational elements are still being put in place.

BCB director from Sylhet division, Rahat Shams, acknowledged that the office will initially operate on a limited scale.

"Space has been allocated within the Sylhet [International Cricket] Stadium offices," Shams said, explaining that the setup would remain modest in its early phase. According to him, the structure will include a room for the Head of Cricket, a small lounge for counsellors, and a meeting room for divisional and district coaches, with existing facilities expected to cover most immediate requirements.

Staffing will also be gradual. Shams informed the office plans to recruit four to five staff members under BCB payroll to manage accounts, administration, logistics, and game development.

Recruitment will begin with the

appointment of the Head of Cricket for Sylhet, with a newspaper advertisement expected within the next five to seven days.

"The criteria include strong cricketing knowledge -- preferably an ex-player," he said, adding that leadership, governance, management, and communication skills would also be essential for

- BCB's first regional office in Sylhet to operate initially from Sylhet International Cricket Stadium; permanent site identified
- Regional Cricket Center to coordinate year-round grassroots programmes at district and upazila levels
- Matching fund model approved, including Tk 15 lakh for First Division League and Tk 7.5 lakh for school cricket
- School Cricket Tournament to begin mid-January with 15 participating schools
- Sunamganj and Moulvibazar still lack BCB-appointed district coaches due to certification challenges

the paid role.

Beyond infrastructure and staffing, the initiative aims to bring structural alignment to year-round cricket activities at the grassroots.

"This initiative is called the Regional Cricket Center," Shams said. The objective, he explained, is to ensure that talented players from rural areas and upazilas remain

within the development pathway rather than dropping out due to a lack of organised opportunities.

To address seasonal challenges, Shams said plans are in place to ensure year-round training despite prolonged monsoon periods. Facilities such as indoor sheds or synthetic turfs will be arranged in coordination with local organisers

within the development pathway rather than dropping out due to a lack of organised opportunities.

He added that the BCB has already approved Tk 15 lakh as a matching fund after Sylhet raised the same amount through foreign remittances for the Sylhet First Division Cricket League 2025-26, which began on January 3 at the Sylhet District Stadium.

An additional Tk 7.5 lakh has been raised for a School Cricket Tournament, which the BCB will

also match, with the competition scheduled to begin around mid-January.

Despite the progress, challenges remain in manpower and coaching depth. Shams acknowledged that Sunamganj and Moulvibazar still lack BCB-appointed district coaches, largely due to difficulties in finding suitable Level-1 certified candidates.

Although a Level-1 coaching course was held in Sylhet in late October, he stressed that standards would not be compromised. "You can't make a top coach overnight," Shams said, underlining why certification and selection processes will remain strict, with only deserving candidates progressing.

'Individual hard work behind Afghans' T20 success'

Afghanistan's dashing opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz shares a special bond with Bangladesh, having made his international and franchise debuts here in 2019. Since then, the 24-year-old has made a name for himself, with his aggressive batting and sharp wicketkeeping skills increasing his demand in franchise cricket around the globe, as he emerged as one of Afghanistan's key players. Now representing Dhaka Capitals in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), Gurbaz spoke to The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan about his experience in Bangladesh, the presence of his brother Masood Gurbaz in the same tournament with Chattogram Royals, and Afghanistan's ambitions at the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup. The excerpts are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): Tell us about your experience in the BPL.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz (RG): The BPL was my first franchise league, and from here I went on to play in other leagues. I had a very good experience. The people are nice, the fans are amazing, and they support us everywhere -- both inside and outside Bangladesh. I really love playing here in Bangladesh.

DS: How do you prepare yourself while playing in Bangladesh, where the surface can be tricky?

RG: For me, cricket is cricket. It doesn't matter whether it's the [Indian Premier League] IPL, the BPL or anywhere else. I just respect the game and play it with love. I'm happy here, making many friends and receiving a lot of love, which is what every player wants. I try my best to give something back, and I think that's the best way to live.

DS: Afghanistan players now represent franchise leagues worldwide. What is the recipe behind your success?

RG: I would say individual hard work. Everyone works really hard, which is why you see Afghan players succeeding in leagues all over the world. There is a lot of natural talent in Afghanistan. We may not have as many facilities as some other countries, but with what we have, I think we are one of the strongest teams. I'm also very happy with our cricket board at the moment -- they are working hard to improve facilities, and we really appreciate that.

DS: Afghanistan is set to relaunch its own franchise league after 2018. What are your thoughts on that?

RG: The [Afghanistan Premier League] APL will be a great opportunity for Afghan players. It will help young players earn money and support themselves. Most importantly, it will help us identify new talent.



DS: What is the key to being a successful opener?

RG: Again, it's individual hard work. I love the game, I love practice, and I love working hard. There's one simple belief: if not today, maybe tomorrow; if not tomorrow, one day you will get the result. What you see now is the result of six, seven, or even ten years of hard work. I'm grateful for whatever I have achieved -- for my country, my family, and everything else. I've achieved my dreams, and that's very special.

DS: Are you looking forward to a face-off with your brother, Masood Gurbaz, in this BPL?

RG: He's a talented young player and still has time to improve his skills. This is a very good opportunity for him to show his talent to the world. He follows what I do in cricket, but I always tell him not to copy me -- just learn from the discipline and the work ethic.

DS: Like you, he also made his BPL debut early in his career. Does that make it extra special?

RG: That's exactly why I'm happy for him. I hope the BPL brings him good luck as well. He deserves to play in other leagues because he has the ability. My dream is also to play alongside him in the same team one day, and that our names would come side-by-side 'Gurbaz, Gurbaz'.

DS: What's your take on Afghanistan being placed in a tough T20 World Cup group alongside South Africa and New Zealand?

RG: We've already played against them and beaten them before. For us, it's simple -- we don't care who the opponent is, whether it's Canada, South Africa or New Zealand. We respect all teams, but on the day, whoever plays better cricket will win. We are not a small team anymore.

Real out for Atletico revenge

STAR SPORTS DESK

Real Madrid will walk into Thursday night's Spanish Super Cup semifinal clash with Atletico Madrid in Jeddah with one emotion driving them -- revenge.

The memory is still raw. Back in September, Xabi Alonso's side were humiliated 5-2 at Atletico's home in LaLiga, a defeat that ended Real's unbeaten run and triggered a dramatic downturn. The season unravelled after that night: Xabi found himself on the brink of being sacked, with Los Blancos currently four points behind leaders Barcelona after 19 league matches.

Now, under the Saudi lights of the King Abdullah Stadium, Real finally have a chance to strike back.

Atletico, chasing their fourth Spanish Super Cup, arrive in Jeddah unbeaten in five competitive matches, but their confidence was dented on Sunday after a 1-1 draw against Real Sociedad. The draw at the Reale Arena left Diego Simeone's side fourth in LaLiga, a daunting 11 points adrift of Barcelona.

With their title hopes seemingly gone at the halfway stage of the season, the Super Cup has taken on added significance for Atletico, along with the Copa del Rey and Champions League, as they look to end a five-year wait for silverware.

Real, though, are arriving with renewed belief. Xabi has eased the pressure with four straight wins, capped by an emphatic 5-1 home thrashing of Real Betis on Sunday despite the absence of the injured Kylian Mbappe.

Mbappe will again miss the semifinal as he continues to recover from a knee injury, but for Real Madrid, this derby is no longer about who is missing -- it is about making amends.

Leaders Arsenal welcome champions Liverpool

STAR SPORTS DESK

Premier League leaders Arsenal welcome reigning champions Liverpool to the Emirates Stadium on Thursday evening in a heavyweight clash.

The Gunners are firm favourites, having won a remarkable 14 of their 15 home matches this season, including their last 12 in a row. Victory would see Mikel Arteta's side move a massive 17 points clear of fourth-placed Liverpool. Liverpool, however, are on a longer unbeaten run than Arsenal, who have won their last seven games.

After suffering nine defeats in 12 matches across all competitions earlier in the campaign, Arne Slot's men are now



unbeaten in their last nine games. Liverpool beat Arsenal 1-0 at Anfield in August, but a mounting injury crisis threatens their hopes of completing a double. Hugo Ekiti is a major doubt with a hamstring issue, Alexander Isak is sidelined, and Mohamed Salah remains away on Africa Cup of Nations duty with Egypt.

CORPORATE BOOKING

Fantasy Kingdom and Water Kingdom will be reserved on 8th January (Thursday), 2026 for Corporate Booking.

From 9th January (Friday), 2026 Fantasy Kingdom and Water Kingdom will remain open for all.

Contact: 01969-910100





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US seizes Russia-flagged tanker China slam US 'bullying'

REUTERS, Washington

The US seized an empty Russian-flagged, Venezuela-linked oil tanker in the Atlantic Ocean yesterday as part of President Donald Trump's aggressive push to dictate oil flows in the Americas and force Venezuela's socialist government to become an ally.

After capturing Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in an attack on Caracas on Saturday, the US is continuing to blockade vessels under sanctions off the South American country, a member of the OPEC oil group. The US Coast Guard and US military special forces apprehended the Mariner tanker, which had refused to be boarded last month and had switched to Russia's flag, officials said.

The US operation was supported by Britain's Royal Air Force and one of its military vessels, which British Defence Secretary John Healey said was part of "global efforts to crack down on sanctions busting."

SEE PAGE 5 COL 3



This undated handout photo released yesterday by the US European Command's X account shows the M/V Bella 1 oil tanker in the northern Atlantic Ocean. The US military yesterday seized the Russian-flagged oil tanker in the North Atlantic for sanctions violations, bringing an end to a multi-week pursuit by American forces.

PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh added to US visa bond list

Travellers now have to deposit up to \$15,000

UNB, Dhaka

The United States has expanded a visa bond policy to include Bangladesh and 24 other countries, requiring citizens of these nations to post refundable bonds of up to \$15,000 as part of their application for a US visitor visa, according to the US State Department website.

"Any citizen or national travelling on a passport issued by one of these countries, who is found otherwise eligible for a B1/B2 visa, must post a bond for \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000," the State Department website said, adding the amount would be determined at the time of the visa interview.

Payment must be made through the US Treasury's online platform, Pay.gov.

The list of affected countries now totals 38, mainly from South Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

In addition to Bangladesh, the expanded roster includes nations such as Algeria, Cuba, Nepal, Nigeria and Venezuela. The new requirements are set to take effect January 21, 2026.

US officials say the bond requirement is intended to discourage visitors from overstaying their visas.

However, the policy has drawn criticism for potentially making travel to the US unaffordable for many applicants from developing countries. Although paying a bond does not guarantee a visa, applicants who are denied or who comply with visa terms can receive refunds.



Taher's income doubles, assets dip

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The annual income of Syed Abdullah Mohammad Shishir Manir, a Supreme Court lawyer, has declared a total asset of Tk 1.12 crore, over three times less than that of his wife, according to his affidavit.

In contrast, the wealth of his wife, Sumaiya Rashid Raian, a private service holder, is estimated at Tk 2.74 crore during the same period.

Taher, 67, contesting from Cumilla-11, was elected from the same

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Shishir Manir declares Tk 1.12cr asset

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami candidate Mohammad Shishir Manir, also a Supreme Court lawyer, has declared a total asset of Tk 1.12 crore, over three times less than that of his wife, according to his affidavit.

The asset of his wife, Sumaiya Rashid Raian, a private service holder, is estimated at Tk 2.74 crore during the same period.

Taher, 67, contesting from Cumilla-11, was elected from the same

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Sarwar earns monthly Tk 28,000 from writing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Golam Sarwar, the NCP candidate for Narsingdi-2, also a Supreme Court lawyer, has declared a total asset of Tk 1.12 crore, over three times less than that of his wife, according to his affidavit.

The asset of his wife, Sumaiya Rashid Raian, a private service holder, is estimated at Tk 2.74 crore during the same period.

In the last fiscal year, Shishir Manir, who is running from Sunamganj-2 constituency, earned nearly Tk 52 lakh from

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

Mitu has movable assets worth Tk 74 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahmuda Alam Mitu, the Jhalakathi-1 candidate from the NCP, holds movable assets worth over Tk 74 lakh, but doesn't own any land, house, or apartment, shows her affidavit submitted to the Election Commission.

Sarwar has no bank account. His sole asset is Tk 3 lakh in cash, the document shows.

The 32-year-old, who mentioned HSC as his highest educational qualification, listed his current profession as "writer" and his previous

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

The 36-year-old, a physician, declared assets of 20 bhoris of gold valued at Tk 45 lakh, Tk 28.40 lakh in cash, and Tk 51,000 in a bank account.

Like Mitu, her physician husband, Md Mahbubur Rahman,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Labour migration up 12% despite challenges Says RMMRU report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Labour migration from Bangladesh increased nearly 12 percent last year despite growing global restrictions, rising migration costs, and safety concerns for migrant workers.

More than 11.3 lakh Bangladeshis migrated abroad for work in 2025, with 67 percent of them heading to Saudi Arabia, according to data from the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training.

Although Bangladeshi workers migrated to 141 countries, about 90 percent went to just five countries -- Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Singapore, Kuwait, and the Maldives -- according to the "Trends, Achievements and Challenges of Labour Migration from Bangladesh 2015" report by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).

Bangladesh remains one of the world's top remittance-receiving countries, with migrant workers sending home a record \$32.82 billion in 2025, the highest in 25 years, said the report, which was unveiled yesterday at an event held at the National Press Club.

Female labour migration continued to decline, raising serious concerns.

Only 62,317 women migrated for work in 2025, accounting for just 5.5 percent of total migrants.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Pakistan eyes selling fighter jets to Bangladesh

REUTERS, Islamabad

The air force chiefs of Pakistan and Bangladesh held talks on a potential pact covering the sale of JF-17 Thunder fighter jets to Dhaka, Pakistan's military said, as Islamabad widens its arms supply ambitions and beefs up ties with Bangladesh.

The talks in Islamabad come as Pakistan looks to capitalise on the success of its air force in the conflict with arch-foe India in May last year, the worst fighting in nearly three decades between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

Pakistan's Air Chief Marshal Zahoor Ahmed Baber Sidhu and Bangladesh counterpart Hasan Mahmood Khan had detailed talks on procurement of the JF-17 Thunder, a multi-role combat aircraft jointly developed with China, the military's press wing said.

Pakistan has also assured Bangladesh of the "fast-tracked delivery of Super Mushshak trainer aircraft, along with a complete training and long term support ecosystem," it added in Tuesday's statement.

The talks signal improving ties as the South Asian nations have grown closer since massive protests in August 2024 drove then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to flee to India, shattering Dhaka's relationship with New Delhi.

"The visit underscored the strong historical ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh and reflected a shared resolve to deepen defence cooperation and build a long-term strategic partnership," the military said.

In the wake of Hasina's ouster, Islamabad and Dhaka have resumed direct trade for the first time since the 1971 war that brought independence for Bangladesh, while their military officials have held several meetings.

The JF-17s have become the cornerstone of the Pakistani military's weapons development programme, figuring in a deal with Azerbaijan and a \$4 billion weapons pact with the Libyan National Army.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2



WARMTH OF LOVE ... A family of rhesus monkeys at the Chattogram Zoo huddle together to keep warm yesterday as a cold wave sweeps over the country. Like humans, animals too seek warmth in togetherness.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Passenger dies as Biman flight 'skips emergency landing'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A passenger died after falling ill aboard a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight bound for London on New Year's Eve, with co-passengers alleging that negligence by the pilot contributed to the death.

Several passengers said the 60-year-old passenger's life could have been saved had the pilot in-command, Captain Aliya Mannan, diverted the aircraft to a nearby airport for emergency medical treatment instead of returning to Dhaka.

The incident occurred on Biman flight BG 201, operating on the Dhaka-Sylhet-London route, on December 31.

According to Biman sources, the aircraft departed Sylhet and, while flying over Pakistan near Lahore, a passenger fell ill, prompting the cabin crew to seek medical assistance onboard. A doctor who responded attended to the passenger but was unable to diagnose the condition.

The pilot then decided to return

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

'Level-playing field is still absent' Jamaat tells EC one party getting special treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami has demanded the removal of partisan deputy commissioners and superintendents of police from their posts, equal treatment to all parties and action against violations of electoral code of conduct ahead of the February 12 national election and referendum.

The party alleged that the level playing field for political parties has not ensured yet, a particular party is being given extensive campaign facilities and protection, and Jamaat's candidates faced discrimination in several cases during the scrutiny of nomination papers by returning officers.

It added that if the next election is "arranged", the country will face an existential crisis and fall into a dangerous situation.

Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher made the remarks while briefing reporters following its five-member delegation met Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin at the capital's Nirbahan Bhaban yesterday.

He said, "We have seen major discrimination in the process of scrutinising nominations. We have also seen inconsistencies in administrative decisions. For example, in cases involving dual citizenship, nominations have been accepted in some places, while in similar cases they have been rejected elsewhere."

Citing examples of dual citizenship, he said BNP

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