

"We are going to do something on Greenland, whether they like it or not."

US President Donald Trump

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Vengeance brings disaster, dialogue is the way

Tarique says at meet with senior journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sustaining the democratic process and ensuring accountability at every level, at any cost, is essential to bringing meaningful changes to the country, BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman said yesterday.

Bangladesh must be freed from the politics of vengeance, he said, stressing that political differences should never harden into deep divisions.

"We are facing tough challenges. The democratic process must be kept alive at all costs. We had problems, we have problems, but we do not want to return to the situation before August 5, 2024. Therefore, putting aside our differences, everyone must work

together," Tarique said at an event where he exchanged greetings with editors and journalists at a city hotel.

Recalling moments that shaped his political outlook, he referred to his father's janaza in 1981, his mother's janaza on December 31, 2025, and the events of August 5, 2024.

"So I feel this is not only about me. For the leaders and activists of my party, and for the people of the country as a whole, these examples are perhaps

the clearest reasons why there is absolutely no need to go back to the situation before August 5," he said.

Tarique warned that violence and cycles

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FREE SPEECH KEY TO DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION - PAGE 2



City kitchens go cold amid gas crisis

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Gas supply to thousands of homes in different parts of the capital came to a complete or partial halt yesterday morning after a key valve on a distribution line burst.

The valve explosion in front of Gono Bhaban on Mirpur Road comes on the heels of a leak in a major pipeline under the Turag river last week.

A valve is a mechanical device used to control the flow of gas through a pipeline.

The incident left large swathes of the capital -- particularly Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Shyamoli, New Market, Hazaribagh, Gabtoli, Farmgate, Kazipara and Shewrapara -- with little to no supply yesterday.

To repair the leak, several valves in the distribution network were shut, worsening pressure in Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Shyamoli, New Market, Hazaribagh and surrounding areas, said Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution, which supplied gas through pipelines in Dhaka and surrounding areas, in a press release.

With kitchens rendered near unusable, many families were forced to rely on induction stoves or restaurant food, driving up demand and costs. Long queues were seen in front of eateries across affected neighbourhoods, where customers complained of sudden price hikes.

Abu Kalam, an auto-rickshaw driver in Purba Kazipara, was seen buying lunch for his three-member family from

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PHOTO ON PAGE 14, MORE B1, B3

MUSABBIR MURDER DB detains 'shooter, 2 others'

TOUSIF KARIM

The Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police has detained three individuals, including an alleged shooter, in connection with the murder of Swechhasebak Dal leader Azizur Rahman Musabbir.

Another suspect involved in the killing has also been identified.

The DB, however, has yet to officially acknowledge the detentions.

The detainees are alleged shooter Zinnat, his associate Riaz and Billal, two senior DB officials and two officers directly involved in the investigation told The Daily Star.

Musabbir, the former general secretary of the

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PHOTO: STAR

Winners of the bti-The Daily Star Stellar Women Award 2025 pose for a photo at the Banquet Hall of the Kurmitola Golf Club last night.

Celebrating women who redefine boundaries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twelve women from diverse backgrounds were honoured yesterday for their exceptional contributions to nation building at the bti-The Daily Star Stellar Women 2025 Gala.

Organised by Building Technology and Ideas Ltd (bti) in association with The Daily Star, the second edition of the Stellar Women Award recognised women for their achievements across professional and social sectors at the banquet hall of Kurmitola Golf Club in Dhaka Cantonment.

The awardees -- selected in 12 categories, ranging from entrepreneurship and engineering to health, environment and agriculture -- are Nomrota Sarkar (entrepreneurship); Mouri Morium (writing); Kyoko Arani (marketing); Nishat Afrose (architecture -- interior and landscaping); Mabiha Akter (sports); Afsana Louqman (architecture -- residential and commercial); Papi Sarwar Dithi (art and culture); Nusrat Nur Maisha (engineering); Shaila Abedin (finance and banking); Dr Tahsin Ferdous (health); Shah Israt Azmery (environment); and Nasrin Akter Ivy (agriculture).

Speaking at the gala, bti Chairman Arshi Haider said the award initiative reflected the

organisation's commitment to promoting women's leadership and empowerment. "In two years, the Stellar Women programme has received nationwide recognition.

"Through this, if we can make the smallest contribution towards bringing a change, I think it would be one of bti's greatest achievements.... The woman is also the unsung hero of every home.



"... A few years ago, we decided to have this programme, in partnership with the leading English newspaper of the country, the torchbearer of transparency and fearless journalism. Now, fearless journalism has a big price tag, a heavy price -- we all know what

happened on the 18th and 19th of December.... I extend my sympathy to every member of The Daily Star team for the trauma that you have suffered."

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam said, "The Stellar Women Awards is one of the most crucial awards for women's emancipation, and I, as a representative of The Daily Star, am very proud to be part of it.

"The Daily Star partners with many organisations and presents several awards each year, but the Stellar Women Award is unique. It recognises professional women for their skills, intelligence, academic achievements and personal courage."

He added, "In our country, when a woman breaks through various obstacles, she is not only talented -- I would say she is super-talented -- because she has to constantly prove her worth. She must break the glass ceiling that prevents her from becoming what she truly is.

"The Stellar Women Award helps women gain recognition, be socially honoured, and, most importantly, build the self-confidence that is absolutely essential. Equally important, it sets an example for others."

Pointing out that women make up half

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Iran protests rage on, crackdown fears grow

AGENCIES

Rights groups yesterday expressed alarm that Iranian authorities were intensifying a deadly crackdown under cover of an internet blackout on the biggest demonstrations in the Islamic republic in over three years after another night of

protests yet on Thursday, new demonstrations took place late Friday, according to images verified by AFP and other videos published on social media.

This was despite an internet shutdown imposed by the authorities, with monitor Netblocks saying early Saturday that "metrics show the nationwide internet

security forces could be preparing to commit a "massacre under the cover of a sweeping communications blackout".

Norway-based Iran Human Rights group has said at least 51 people have been killed in the crackdown so far, but warned the actual toll could be higher.

It posted images it said were of corpses



Son of shah calls for city centres to be seized

Revolutionary Guards declare security a 'red line'

Internet blackout still in place after 36 hours

blackout remains in place at 36 hours".

Amnesty International said it was analysing "distressing reports that security forces have intensified their unlawful use of lethal force against protesters" since Thursday in an escalation "that has led to further deaths and injuries".

Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi warned on Friday that

of people shot dead in the protests piled on the floor of Alghadir hospital in eastern Tehran.

"These images provide further evidence of the excessive and lethal use of force against protesters," IHR said.

Iranian authorities are using the "most blatant tools of repression", prize-winning filmmakers Mohammad

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

'Our stance unchanged'

Bulbul says no word from ICC yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul reiterated that the board will remain steadfast on its stance over the security of the Bangladesh contingent for the ICC T20 World Cup, scheduled to be held in India and Sri Lanka from February 7.

Speaking at a school cricket event at Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday evening, Bulbul said the board is yet to receive any reply from International Cricket Council (ICC) and is awaiting guidance, expected by Monday or thereafter.

"We haven't received any response yet [after a letter to ICC was submitted on Thursday]. We have provided all the links, attachments, and information requested. We are now waiting to see what ICC advises," Bulbul said.

On the question of whether Bangladesh would consider playing at an alternate venue in India, he stressed that the decision ultimately rests with the government.

"Another venue in India is still an Indian venue. The venue itself doesn't matter. But we are not making this

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FIRST DAY OF APPEAL HEARINGS

EC clears 51 to contest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 51 aspirants, including AHM Hamidur Rahman Azad, assistant secretary general of Jamaat, and independent candidate Tasnim Jara, regained their candidacy yesterday as the Election Commission began reviewing appeals against returning officers' decisions.

Returning officers had rejected their nominations after finding issues in their forms during scrutiny. Grounds for cancellation included errors in affidavits, concealment of information, loan defaults, dual citizenship complications, and similar irregularities.

Most challenges sought to overturn rejections, with one appeal instead contesting an accepted nomination.

During the hearings, EC officials approved an appeal by a rival against the decision to accept the nomination of BNP candidate for Brahmanbaria-1, Syed AK Ekramuzzaman, cancelling his candidacy after finding him to be a fugitive from the law.

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin led the hearings at the EC headquarters in the capital's Agargaon.

Briefing the media afterwards, EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said, "On the first day, hearings were held on 70 appeals. Of these, 52 appeals were granted, including one challenging the acceptance of a nomination paper. In addition, 15 appeals were rejected, while 3 remain pending."

The EC will complete hearings on a total of 645 appeals by January 18. AHM Hamidur Rahman Azad, Jamaat's candidate from Cox's Bazar-2, regained his nomination after it was cancelled during scrutiny on January 2 due to incomplete information related to cases and punishment.

The EC also cleared Tasnim Jara, an independent candidate for Dhaka-9. Jara, who recently resigned from the National Citizen Party, was rejected by the returning officer based on a mismatch in the signatures from one percent of voters during scrutiny on January 3.

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Hamidur Rahman



Tasnim Jara



Classical and contemporary dancer Mubashshira Kamal Era mesmerises the audience with a stunning solo performance at the bti-The Daily Star Stellar Women-2025 gala at the Banquet Hall of the Kurmitola Golf Club last night. *Bottom*, a panel discussion on “Transforming Society by Empowering Women” was held on the sidelines of the event, participated by Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation; Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh; and Shaila Shahid, climate resilience and DRR specialist at Miyamoto International, USA.

PHOTO: STAR



“Through this [award], if we can make the smallest contribution in bringing a change, I think it would be one of our bti’s greatest achievements.... The woman is also the unsung hero of every home.”

ARSHI HAIDER
chairman of bti



“The Stellar Women Award is unique. It recognises professional women for their skills, intelligence, academic achievements, and personal courage.”

MAHFUZ ANAM, editor and
publisher of The Daily Star



Vengeance brings disaster

FROM PAGE 1
of retaliation inevitably lead to dangerous consequences.

“The nation has seen the consequences of vengeance or retaliation on August 5, 2024. Even if there are differences of opinion, they must be bridged through discussions. Differences should not escalate into conflicts,” he said.

He emphasised that the democratic process must continue at all national and local levels, including union parishad, municipal, and trade body elections.

Urging politicians to work for the country’s independence and sovereignty, Tarique said lessons must be drawn from pivotal moments in history, including 1971, 1990 and August 5, 2024.

“If we keep these events in mind and work honestly for the country, I firmly believe we can lead the nation in the right direction,” he said.

Calling on leaders of all parties and people from all walks of life to remain engaged, Tarique said that, as a political worker, he foresaw many difficult challenges ahead.

“We have different kinds of differences among us. We should be able to discuss these differences through dialogue,” he added.

Referring to his recent travels to different parts of the country since returning, he said he sensed a deep yearning for direction and hope, particularly among the younger generation.

“Not only the new generation, but every generation expects guidance. People have many expectations from those involved in politics. Even if it is not possible to fulfil all expectations, if politicians work to protect the country’s independence and sovereignty, it will be possible to lead the nation on the right path,” he said.

Seeking constructive engagement from the media, Tarique called for criticism that is purposeful rather than performative.

“Criticism is necessary, but not criticism for the sake of criticism. We want criticism that helps solve the country’s problems.”

Outlining policy ideas, Tarique said the BNP plans to introduce a “farmer card” for around one and a half crore farmers.

“The huge number of people who

provide food for 20 crore citizens have no proper platform to raise their issues. We must hear their problems ourselves.”

Referring to the role of his late mother Khaleida Zia, he said the party also plans to introduce a family card to help educated women become economically self-reliant if the BNP is voted to power.

He said the party intends to adopt a prevention-based approach in the health sector to reduce costs and improve public wellbeing.

“If people are made aware of which foods increase the risk of kidney disease, heart problems or diabetes, state expenditure will fall and people will remain healthier,” he said, adding that healthcare workers would be appointed for this purpose.

Noting that the country’s population stands at around 20 crore, with a large proportion being young, Tarique stressed the urgency of creating employment opportunities at home and abroad.

“If we fail to do this, then whether we talk about August 5, the movement of 1990 or the Liberation War of 1971, I think all our hopes may be destroyed,” he said.

He also drew attention to the growing drinking water crisis, warning that pollution of major rivers could have devastating consequences.

“Today, the Buriganga is polluted, the Shitalakya is nearly half polluted, and pressure on the Meghna is also increasing. If this trend continues, the future shortage of safe water could become catastrophic,” he said.

Tarique said the party’s plans also include health cards to ensure healthcare for all, modernisation of vocational and technical institutes, skills development through training, expansion of the IT sector, entrepreneurship promotion, development of IT parks with modern facilities, and easing barriers to content creation.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Standing Committee members Mirza Abbas, Abdul Moyeen Khan, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Salahuddin Ahmed and Major (ret’d) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed were present at the event.

The programme was moderated by BNP Media Cell Convener Maudud Hossain Alamgir Pavel and Press Secretary Saleh Shibby.

Bangladesh quick Mustafizur Rahman receiving unofficial offers for a return in Indian Premier League, calling them “completely fake news.”

According to Indian media outlet NDTV Sports, ICC chairman Jay Shah will meet officials of Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in Vadodara today to resolve Bangladesh’s reluctance to travel to India.

Celebrating women

FROM PAGE 1
the country’s population, he highlighted women’s contributions across society and how they have excelled in microcredit, social enterprise, business and other professional fields.

He also spoke about how the women in his newspaper are exceptional and resilient – succeeding in a male-dominated environment.

Anam then thanked bti for joining hands in this venture.

The event also featured a panel discussion titled “Transforming Society by Empowering Women”, joined by Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation; Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh; and environmental lawyer Shaila Shahid, a WIN DRR award winner, as panellists.

Shaheen Anam said, “Women’s economic empowerment does not happen in a vacuum.... Nearly 50 percent of our girls are married before the age of 18, which cuts short education and employment opportunities.”

She also stressed the need for policy support such as childcare, safe hostels and security for working women, adding that unpaid care work must also be recognised.

“Empowerment starts from home.... In an environment where even demanding equal rights comes under attack, breaking stereotypes about what women can and cannot do

has become extremely challenging.”

She further said women need support at home and better organisation, adding, “There is not a single woman who is not working, whether through paid or unpaid work”.

Referring to government data, Shaheen Anam said high levels of domestic violence show that women are still seen as less equal at home. “The only way to counter this is by showing evidence of what women do and what they are capable of.... Every woman has the potential to become a Stellar Woman if given the opportunity.

“Men should see women as partners, not adversaries, and women should see men as allies, not enemies. Both must work together for real change to happen.”

Farah Kabir said women’s empowerment must go beyond symbolism and address deep structural inequalities, stressing that women are not a homogeneous group.

“Empowerment is a process through which people who are denied voice and entitlements acquire the ability to make choices.... Every human being has agency, and that mindset has to change.”

Highlighting the rise in violence against women, she said Bangladesh must “move from impunity to accountability”, noting that justice remains far-fetched due to entrenched systemic failures.

Kabir also criticised the lack of

political commitment, pointing out that “less than four percent of election candidates are women”, and questioned whether political actors are “really ready to be inclusive”.

She stressed the need to engage men and boys, reform education systems and adopt an intersectional, life-cycle-based approach to empowerment. “You cannot have selective justice. It has to be universal human rights.”

Shaila Shahid said women across Bangladesh are emerging as “invisible faces and forces of resilience” through grassroots leadership in climate and disaster management.

Sharing experiences from the Sundarbans and the Satkhira region, she said, “Women are playing key roles in water management groups, conservation committees and disaster preparedness, supported by government agencies and local communities.... Real transformation happens when women are organised and when we put our trust in women.”

She noted that women’s leadership is shifting power relations and influencing policy.

Calling on young women, she said, “You do not need permission to begin.”

Women and Children’s Affairs Adviser Sharmeen S Murshid was invited as the chief guest for the programme but could not attend due to a sudden illness.

The gala concluded with the presentation of crests, cheques and scarves to the awardees.

Free speech key to democratic transition

Editors, senior journalists at meet-and-greet with Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Any political party that seeks democratic transformation must ensure an environment for free speech, editors and senior journalists said yesterday.

At a greetings exchange programme with BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman at a city hotel, they said journalists had endured torture and repression over the past 15 years under a fascist regime, which severely dented press freedom and made the working environment unsafe.

They added that the July uprising had created a new opportunity to safeguard freedom of speech in the country.

At the beginning of the event, Tarique greeted the editors and journalists.

In his speech, New Age Editor and Editors’ Council President Nurul Kabir said that if Bangladesh is to achieve a democratic transformation of its future society and state, there must be an environment conducive to democratic journalism.

“In the past, many journalists faced lawsuits, attacks, and various kinds of injustice, and there was no proper environment to fight those cases legally.”

Many who supported the previous regime now face cases and are in jail. They should be punished if found guilty, but that must be done through a proper judicial process. The government said it would look into the matter, but it has not kept its promise to ensure their legal rights, Kabir added.

“If we cannot stop the repetition of the injustices that occurred under the previous government, we will not be able to set an example of fair treatment of newspaper and media workers.”

Shafik Rehman, founder editor of Jaijai Din, proposed introducing a pension system for journalists. He also suggested forming a committee to investigate the money theft from Bangladesh Bank and reorganising the law enforcement agencies.

“Recently, a survey showed that 70 percent of people in the country are interested in voting for the BNP. There is truth in this claim. But this interest must be turned into votes, and only then can the party come to power.”

Manabzamin Editor-in-Chief Matiur Rahman

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‘Our stance unchanged’

FROM PAGE 1
decision on our own – it is a government matter. Our earlier stance remains unchanged.”

Asked whether the team would participate if the schedule could not be shifted from India, Bulbul said, “At this moment, I cannot say anything until we receive the letter.”

He also ruled out reports of

21-yr-old dies after taking poison over unpaid dues

Family alleges provocation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A 21-year-old youth died after ingesting poison in Deraipapazilla of Sunamganj, with his family alleging that a creditor assaulted him and provoked him to take poison over unpaid dues.

The victim, Joy Mahapatra, son of Liton Mahapatra of Bhangadhar village in the upazila, fell seriously ill on Thursday evening and died at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital on Friday morning.

Emanul Haque Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Deraipapazilla Police Station, said, “We are investigating the incident. No case has been filed yet.”

According to locals, Joy bought a mobile phone on instalments for Tk 5,500 about three months ago from Amirul Islam of Burhanpur village. About Tk 2,500 remained unpaid, leading to a dispute.

Joy’s mother, Shelly Mahapatra, alleged assault and provocation by the creditor.

She said, “My son came home vomiting. When I asked him what happened, he said Amirul made him ingest something over the debt issue.”

“After my son was hospitalised, I went to meet Amirul, and he told me that he gave my son poison and told him to die if he couldn’t pay the weekly instalment of Tk 500.”

Kurdish men had been shot dead by security forces in the western city of Kermanshah on Thursday and another man, a former bodybuilding champion, killed in the northern city of Rasht on Friday.

Yesterday, the start of the working week in Iran, one man in Tehran said he was unable to check his work email.

“This is the price to pay before the victory of the people,” he said.

US President Donald Trump again refused on Friday to rule out new military action against Iran after Washington backed and joined Israel’s 12-day war against the Islamic republic in June.

“Iran’s in big trouble. It looks to me that the people are taking over certain cities that nobody thought were really possible just a few weeks ago,” Trump said.

Asked about his message to Iran’s leaders, Trump said: “You better not start shooting because we’ll start shooting too.”

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ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে 'ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার' পূবালী ব্যাংকের প্রায় সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়

India, Turkey, Egypt envoys meet Tarique

BSS, Dhaka

Three foreign envoys paid courtesy calls on BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman at his Gulshan office yesterday.

Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma met Tarique Rahman around 5:10pm, said BNP media cell member Sayrul Kabir Khan.

On the same day, Turkish Ambassador Ramis Sen paid a courtesy call on the BNP chairman in the evening. During the discussion, the two sides exchanged views on various issues of bilateral interest between Bangladesh and Turkey, Sayrul said.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Standing Committee Member Salahuddin Ahmed were present at the meeting.

Egyptian Ambassador Omar Mohie Eldin Ahmed Fahmy also met Tarique. The courtesy meeting was held at 7:30pm, with Fakhrul and Salahuddin present.



Farmers separate chaff from Aman paddy using rakes during the Nabanna season, allowing cold winds to carry away the lighter husk while the grains collect below. Despite a good harvest, farmers are disappointed as wholesale prices remain low at Tk 1,100-1,200 per maund. The photo was taken at Katianangla village in Batiaghata, Khulna yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Cold wave grips north, threatens livelihoods

Panchagarh records lowest temperature at 8.3°C



STAR REPORT

A persistent cold wave has gripped northern Bangladesh for several days, intensifying the suffering of poor and marginalised people and threatening their livelihoods.

Panchagarh recorded the country's lowest temperature at 8.3 degrees Celsius in the 24 hours ending at 9:00am yesterday.

The worst affected are people living in riverine char areas along the Brahmaputra, Teesta, Dharla, Dudhkumar and Gangadhar rivers, where poverty, inadequate shelter and lack of warm clothing have compounded the impact of the cold. Many are burning straw and dry leaves to keep warm.

Farmer Ratin Chandra Das, 65, of Gangadapur village in Rangpur Sadar upazila, said a biting cold has prevailed for nearly three weeks with no signs of easing. "The cold is gradually becoming more severe. If this continues, survival itself will become difficult," he asked.

Farmer Abed Ali, 50, from Shimulbari village, warned that prolonged cold conditions would seriously disrupt agricultural production.

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Mob rule, shrinking freedom mark post-July politics

Speakers tell policy dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mob violence, state inaction, and growing self-censorship have emerged as defining features of the post-July political landscape, speakers said yesterday, warning that the rule of law has weakened rather than improved since the uprising.

They said as the election approaches, space for human rights and freedom of expression is shrinking, with vaguely worded laws still being used as "political weapons" amid weak accountability.

The observations were made at a policy dialogue titled "Political Parties, Human Rights and Freedom of Expression", organised by the Centre for Governance Studies at the CIRDP auditorium in the capital. Civil society members, politicians and journalists attended the event.

CGS Executive Director Zillur

Mob culture did not arise on its own but was enabled by the state. Extortion, tender manipulation and land grabbing have continued since the uprising, with political parties still relying on "money, muscle and religion".

IFTEKHARUZZAMAN
TIB Executive Director

Narratives of the uprising are being "commodified" for political gain, similar to how the Liberation War was exploited over the past 15 years. The erosion of rights is closely tied to political culture and the electoral cycle.

ZILLUR RAHMAN
CGS Executive Director

Rahman said narratives of the uprising are being "commodified" for political gain, similar to how the Liberation War was exploited over the past 15 years.

He said the erosion of rights is closely tied to political culture and the electoral cycle.

"Human rights and freedom of expression are not isolated issues. Experiences show that as elections near, these spaces shrink," he said, warning that threats, violence, harassment and self-censorship are narrowing civic space.

While acknowledging discussions on legal reform, Zillur said changing laws alone is not enough. "If laws remain vague and oversight weak, they can easily become political weapons," he said, adding that this fuels fear and uncertainty.

Expressing scepticism about power structures, he said whether they are political leaders or

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'Level playing field vital for credible polls'

EU Election Observer Mission chief says EC, law enforcers must not be politicised

PORIMOL PALMA

A level playing field for the election is essential, and institutions, including the Election Commission and law enforcement agencies, must not be politicised, European Union Election Observer Mission (EOM) chief Ivars Ijabs has said.

"A level playing field is essential because democracy means each citizen is equal, implying that financial or gender inequalities should not play a role," he said in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star on Friday.

An 11-member core team of the EU EOM is already in Bangladesh and is meeting various stakeholders, including the EC, civil society groups, women and minority organisations, and political parties, to assess the overall election environment.

Eventually, 200 independent observers from the EU will come to Bangladesh to observe the polls and referendum scheduled for February 12.



We will not be involved in the political game, but we will watch how a result is achieved and provide a report with recommendations afterwards, as we see this as a partnership with Bangladesh.

IVARS IJABS

Asked why Bangladesh's election is important to the EU, Ijabs said, "In a turbulent world, we need stable, predictable, and democratic partners for investment and cooperation, and Bangladesh has proven it can be such a partner. This is why your election is so important to us."

Explaining the method of election observation, Ijabs compared the mission's role to that of spectators in a cricket match.

"We will not be involved in the political game, but we will watch how a result is achieved and provide a report with recommendations afterwards, as we see this as a partnership with Bangladesh," said Ijabs, a member of the European Parliament from Latvia and a political scientist.

Asked about the current election environment based on observations so far, Ijabs said most meetings had been positive, although the mission has only just begun its work and has not yet met political parties.

He said the election is particularly significant as it is taking place alongside a referendum for the first time after a mass uprising.

"We have met many active young people who stood behind the July uprising in 2024, and we will expand our daily contacts with local civil society," he said.

On the importance of a level playing field, Ijabs said it is fundamental because all citizens are equal in a democracy. While the influence of administrative and financial resources is an issue in many democratic countries, he said it was too early to make preliminary assessments of the situation in Bangladesh.

He said the EC should not be politicised, adding that the mission has already met the EC and will

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'A particular party being favoured ahead of polls'

Alleges Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party (NCP) Convener Nahid Islam yesterday expressed concern about whether a level playing field exists ahead of the upcoming election.

He alleged that the government's special protocol for a particular political party is sending a troubling signal that could undermine electoral fairness.

He also claimed that false and negative reports about the NCP are being published in mainstream media.

Nahid made the remarks while speaking to journalists yesterday after

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Educating women key to a kinder world

Says Oxford University VC Irene Tracey at AUW commencement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Educating daughters will create a kinder world, said Oxford University Vice-Chancellor Irene Tracey yesterday, speaking at the 12th commencement ceremony of the Asian University for Women (AUW).

She said the female graduates carry forward the skill of soft diplomacy – the ability to appreciate differences and understand those not like them.

Human history has become more and more a race between education and catastrophe, she warned.

The programme, held at a hotel in Chattogram city, conferred honorary doctorate degrees on seven distinguished individuals and awarded degrees to 235 women from 11 countries.

"Among today's graduates, 51 have come from Afghanistan, a country where there is currently virtually no progress in women's education. We hope that one day they will return to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



A student receives a degree from the Asian University for Women Vice-Chancellor Dr Rubana Huq at the 12th commencement ceremony of AUW in the port city yesterday. A total of 235 graduates from 11 countries were awarded degrees at the event. AUW also conferred honorary doctorates on seven notable figures for their contributions to society.

PHOTO: STAR

Bring the culprits to book for attacks on minorities

32 citizens urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-two citizens yesterday condemned the killings of and attacks on members of minority communities ahead of the 13th national election.

In a statement, they demanded that those responsible be brought to justice and given exemplary punishment.

The signatories said, "Based on media reports, we are observing with deep anger and concern that in the weeks leading up to the 13th national election, there have been successive planned killings, including the murder of minority citizens, and attacks on their homes and arson incidents, creating a public perception that these acts are aimed at destabilising the country before the election."

They cited the killings of Dipu Das in Bhaluka of Mymensingh, Rana Pratap Bairagi in Jashore and Sarat Chakraborty Mani in Narsingdi.

The citizens noted that communal harmony is a long-standing tradition in Bangladesh and that hatred against any particular religion, community, or ethnic group is rare.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

Christensen takes oath as US envoy to Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brent Christensen, a career foreign service official, was sworn in as the new US Ambassador to Bangladesh on Friday.



The oath of office was administered to Christensen by Deputy Secretary of State Michael R McFaul at the State Department's Foggy Bottom headquarters.

"A m b a s s a d o r Christensen brings deep experience and expertise in US Bangladesh relations," the US Bureau of South and Central Asia said on X.

"We look forward to his leadership in strengthening our trade partnership and promoting US interests in Bangladesh."

Christensen now heads to Dhaka with over 20 years of experience working on US policy towards Bangladesh across his foreign service career, including a prior tour in Dhaka.

He is expected to join the US Embassy in Dhaka on Monday.

On X, it said the US Embassy in Dhaka is pleased to welcome Christensen as the newly sworn-in Ambassador to Bangladesh.

"I am thrilled to return to Bangladesh, a country I know so well. I am excited to lead a great team at Embassy Dhaka, Americans and locally employed staff alike, to enhance US-Bangladesh relations, advance President Trump's agenda, and work hard every day to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous," the ambassador said.

Land for Sale
Land for sale in Uttara, Sector:15, Size-16.24 katha, with RAJUK 22 feet road. NoMedia, call:01301320455



Risking accidents, people cross a railway line by ducking under a safety gate lowered for an approaching train at the Bhadra rail crossing in Rajshahi yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Roadwork disrupts classes, puts students at risk

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Road development work in front of Gobardhanpur Government Primary School in Narendrapur village of Moulvibazar's Kamalganj upazila has been disrupting academic activities and posing health risks to students.

The ongoing road project from Kamalganj upazila to Adampur involves daily construction work, including burning fires to melt pitch, directly in front of the school's main gate. Thick black smoke, dust and ash from the work are spreading across the school premises and entering classrooms, corridors and teachers' rooms.

During visits to the area, pitch melting operations were seen being carried out during school hours, with smoke billowing into classrooms.

Teachers said students frequently suffer from coughing, eye irritation, breathing difficulties and dizziness, while excessive noise from construction work is also affecting their concentration.

"Many students fall sick during classes. Even after closing doors and windows, smoke and dust still enter the classrooms. This is extremely harmful for young children," said a teacher.

Headteacher AKM Manjur Moula



Chowdhury said all construction equipment had been placed in front of the school, worsening the situation.

"We have informed the upazila education officer and the engineer, but no effective steps have been taken so far," he said.


Parent Mifta Mia described the situation as "inhumane" and demanded the immediate removal of construction materials from the front of the school, calling for urgent measures to ensure a safe learning environment.

Upazila Primary Assistant Education


Officer Soma Bhattacharjee said the issue had been reported to higher authorities for immediate action.

Upazila Engineer Saiful Azam said the space was being used temporarily due to a lack of open areas along the road. He added that the school was reportedly closed earlier and that the project was now nearing completion, expected to finish within a week.

Kamalganj UNO Md Asaduzzaman said the administration was looking into the matter and taking necessary steps.



Bangladesh Milk Producer's Co-Operative Union Ltd.
Head Office: Dugdha Bhaban
139-140, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208



e-Tender Notice

Memo No. 47.67.0000.007.07.206.21-757

Date: 08/01/2026

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 (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading of the e-Tender documents of following package from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through and registered bank's branches.

Sl No.	Name of goods	Tender ID	Tender publish date & time	Tender last submission, opening date & time
1	Tin Container with Lid, EOE & Paper Carton for Packing of 1 kg. Ghee (Framework Agreement)	1208468	18/01/26; 15:00	01/02/26; 16:00
2	Tin Container with Lid, EOE & Paper Carton for Packing 5 kg Ghee (Framework Agreement)	1208495	18/01/26; 15:00	01/02/26; 16:00
3	Tin Container with Lid, EOE & Paper Carton for Packing 450gm Ghee (Framework Agreement)	1208504	19/01/26; 15:00	02/02/26; 16:00
4	Plastic Bottle with Cap for Packing of 200ml Matha (Framework Agreement)	1208562	19/01/26; 15:00	02/02/26; 16:00
5	Plastic Bottle with Cap for Packing 500ml Labang (Framework Agreement)	1185424	20/01/26; 15:00	03/02/26; 16:00
6	Inkjet Date Printing Machine (New & Unused)	1184663	20/01/26; 15:00	03/02/26; 16:00
7	S. S. Checker Plate (New % Unused)	1208578	21/01/26; 15:00	05/02/26; 16:00
8	Plastic Container with Lid for 1/2kg. Sana/Para/Khezur Goor Sondesh (Framework Agreement)	1208638	21/01/26; 15:00	05/02/26; 16:00
9	Plastic Container with Lid & Foil for Packing 1 kg & 1/2kg Rashmalai (Framework Agreement)	1208647	22/01/26; 15:00	08/02/26; 16:00
10	Plastic Security Seal (Framework Agreement)	1208654	22/01/26; 15:00	08/02/26; 16:00
11	Plastic Container with Lid for Packing 1kg & 1/2kg Rosgolla (Framework Agreement)	1208661	25/01/26; 15:00	09/02/26; 16:00
12	Truck Chassis with Cabin & Engine (10 & 5 ton, New & Unused)	1184591	25/01/26; 15:00	09/02/26; 16:00
13	Tin Container with Lid, EOE & Paper Carton for Packing 200gm Ghee (Framework Agreement)	1209084	26/01/26; 15:00	10/02/26; 16:00
14	Adhesive Sticker(s) for Plastic Container (Framework Agreement).	1209089	26/01/26; 15:00	10/02/26; 16:00
15	Printed Craft Paper Bag (Framework Agreement) (Re-Tender)	1181515	27/01/26; 15:00	11/02/26; 16:00

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

Eng. Md. Mostafizur Rahman
Deputy Manager & In-charge (Procurement)
E-mail: mvpurchase.ho@gmail.com

D-01

Level playing field

FROM PAGE 3
observe processes such as voter registration and appeal procedures.

On the role of law enforcement agencies, Ijabs said electoral violence is a widespread concern in Bangladesh's political culture. He said the mission's legal analysts are examining the balance between maintaining law and order and political neutrality, an issue that will become increasingly relevant as election day approaches.

Asked about the EU EOM's perspective on the banning of the Awami League and its inability to take part in the polls, Ijabs said issues of transitional justice are painful for many countries.

"We are here to look at how to make the current process participatory, credible, and trusted by citizens, rather than focusing on past legal proceedings," he said.

On recent violent protests and killings that have created fear among the public, he said such violence is extremely worrying, as fear may discourage people from turning out to vote.

"We will pay attention to the opportunities for all groups – including women and ethnic or regional minorities – to participate in the polls," he said.

He suggested that law enforcement agencies maintain law and order but refrain from involvement in the political process on behalf of any particular group.

"This is a crucial

question we will pay a lot of attention to," he added.

On addressing misinformation and disinformation surrounding the elections, Ijabs said the issue has been debated for years in the European Parliament.

"The problem is that policy regulations always lag behind technological progress," he said, suggesting greater engagement with NGOs and fact-checking organisations to counter disinformation.

He also said governments should maintain direct communication with social media platforms to ensure regulation.

On the role of free media, Ijabs said the EU EOM is concerned that political unrest is endangering media freedom, particularly following the attack on The Daily Star and Prothom Alo office buildings.

Asked if he had any message for voters, he said, "Make an informed choice and do not be afraid to participate."

"Democracy is a learning process. You must take previous decisions into account and learn from mistakes to grow and become fit for these turbulent times."

PRAYER
TIMING

JANUARY 11

Faiz Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:36 7:00

JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:40 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Educating women key to a kinder

FROM PAGE 3
their country and lead their nation. Nine students have come from the Rohingya camps, also a place where a brutal line is drawn between need and deprivation. Seven garment factory workers are receiving degrees today; these students once thought their lives would remain limited only to sewing machines," said A UW Vice-Chancellor Rubana Huq.

A UW conferred honorary doctorates on seven notable figures for their contributions to humanity, education, and peace.

Oxford University Vice-Chancellor Irene Tracey was awarded a Doctor of Science and the Advancement of Humankind; University of Tokyo President Teruo Fujii received a Doctor of Science; Japan's former First Lady Akie Abe was conferred a Doctor of Humane Letters; UK House of Lords member Janet Annie Royall received a Doctor of Arts for Leadership and Educational Equity; Bangladesh's former education minister M Osman Faruk was awarded a Doctor of Science in

Educational Development; Japan's former ambassador to Dhaka Ito Naoki received a Doctor of Arts for the Advancement of Peace; and Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiuur Rahman was conferred a Doctor of Creative, Responsible and Courageous Journalism.

Receiving his honorary degree, Matiuur Rahman spoke on the indispensability of independent journalism, expressing concern over recent attacks on major media houses like Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, but remained hopeful. "When times are difficult, independent journalism must be indispensable. Without freedom of thought, democracy cannot survive. I do not lose hope because young people have not abandoned their hope for a humane and just society," he said.

He added, "I am not accepting this honour only for myself; I am accepting it on behalf of the journalists of Bangladesh who work every day in search of truth, often at personal risk."

Former education minister Dr M Osman

Faruk called the passage of the AUW Act, which established it as an independent university free from government intervention, one of his best achievements while in cabinet.

Of the 235 graduates, 152 were from Bangladesh. The class also included students from Afghanistan, India, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Vietnam, and Yemen.

A UW Founder Kamal Ahmad reflected on the university's growth over 18 years, expanding from 127 students to over 2,000 from 22 countries, and emphasised AUW's commitment to educating and professionally placing displaced and refugee women. "Refugee camps are not temporary stations in life. We have students who were born in refugee camps and who go back to visit their parents," he said.

Presiding over the ceremony, AUW Chancellor Cherie Blair reminded graduates that poverty, disease, inequality, and violence will continue to exist in the world, but AUW graduates respond where crises happen.

Man killed in mob beating over theft suspicion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

An unidentified young man was beaten to death on suspicion of theft in Kurigram Sadar upazila early yesterday.

Police recovered the body from Farazi Para village under Panchgachhi union in the morning.

Police and local residents said the youth, aged around 25-26, was suspected of entering the Farazi Para area with the intention of committing theft around 2:30am. Sensing his presence, locals caught him.

He was later beaten by an agitated crowd, resulting in his death on the spot. After receiving information, police rushed to the scene and recovered the body.

OC Jahangir Alam of Kurigram Sadar Police Station confirmed the incident and said the identity of the deceased has yet to be established.

He said it has not been confirmed whether the youth had entered any house to commit theft.

Police have detained three people for questioning in connection with the incident.

Sowrav Das's first solo photo exhibit opens in Ctg



STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A photography exhibition titled "Drishtite Srishti"(Creation in Sight), the first solo show by photographer Sowrav Das, opened at the Zila Shilpakala Academy in Chattogram yesterday.

The three-day exhibition features a series of photographs exploring the theme of time through the interaction of nature and humanity.

Sowrav Das, a senior photojournalist at the daily Prothom Alo, has presented works created using slow-shutter techniques, capturing movement, light and the flow of urban life. In many of the photographs, human figures appear blurred or abstract, emphasising motion and the passage of time.

The opening ceremony was attended by several cultural figures, including Prothom Alo Editor Matiuur Rahman, poet and journalist Abul Momen, and painter and photographer Shoeb Faruquee.

Matiuur Rahman spoke about Sowrav's professional journey, noting that he joined Prothom Alo 15 years ago after receiving formal training from Pathshala. He said Sowrav had been named the newspaper's best photographer three times and had received multiple international awards.

Abul Momen, speaking at the event, discussed the historical influence of photography on visual art, explaining how the camera's ability to capture reality led painters to focus more on light and emotion than literal representation.

Cold wave grips north, threatens

FROM PAGE 3

According to the Rangpur Meteorological Office, the minimum temperatures recorded at 9:00am

yesterday were 10°C in Rangpur, 10.8°C in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat,

8.3°C in Panchagarh, 11°C in Gaibandha, and 10°C in Thakurgaon and Nilphamari.

Rangpur Weather office in-charge and meteorologist Mostafizur Rahman said such weather

may persist throughout January. "The sun may appear occasionally, but its intensity will be weak," he said, adding that the region experiences harsher winters due to its proximity to the Himalayan mountain range.

Untreated medical waste raises health risks in Ctg

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

Medical wastes from different hospitals and diagnostic centres across Chattogram city are being routinely collected and disposed of without proper segregation, raising serious public health risks, including the spread of infectious diseases.

Standard biomedical waste disposal protocols require different coloured bins for specific waste types: red bins for recyclable contaminated waste such as syringes without needles; yellow bins for soiled waste like bandages and cotton swabs; white puncture-proof containers for sharp objects including needles and blades; blue bins for glassware; and black bins for non-biomedical waste.

However, most health centres in the port city are mixing all waste before disposal, as witnessed by this correspondent during visits to several private hospitals in Panchlaish, Mehediabagh and Surson Road areas.

Contacted, Dr Shakeel Ahmed, a public health expert and retired professor of the Bangladesh Institute of Tropical



Hospitals, diagnostics mixing medical waste

Three tonnes of medical waste generated daily; half disposed of improperly

Only three hospitals segregate waste at source

Nagar Seba incinerates 750kg daily; backlog remains

Liquid, hazardous waste spilling near CMCH

Experts warn of severe health risks

and Infectious Diseases, said improper segregation of medical waste poses serious health risks.

"If medical wastes are collected and disposed of without segregation, there might be a risk of contamination of diseases like Hepatitis B, C and HIV among both the collectors and common people," he said.

At Chattogram Medical College Hospital, the region's largest healthcare facility, liquid waste was seen trickling down from unsegregated heaps of garbage onto the road and spreading towards the hospital's emergency department,

directly exposing patients and the public.

According to Dr Jahangir Alam, civil surgeon of Chattogram, there are 290 registered private medical facilities in the city, including 92 hospitals and 198 diagnostic centres, alongside two government hospitals and 14 upazila health complexes.

Sources said a number of unregistered clinics and diagnostic centres have also mushroomed in the city, evading regulatory oversight.

Around three tonnes of medical waste are generated in Chattogram city every day, according to sources at the Chattogram City Corporation. However, there is no study on the volume of medical waste produced across the 15 upazilas of the district.

Only one company, Nagar Seba, currently operates in the city to collect and dispose of medical waste from hospitals, clinics and laboratories. No such service operates at the upazila level.

Pranab Sharma, deputy chief conservancy officer of the city corporation, said the company uses an incinerator set up by the corporation under a JICA project at the Halishahar landfill to dispose of medical waste.

However, officials of Nagar Seba said the company is collecting and disposing of only half of the hazardous waste generated in the city, around 1.5 tonnes daily.

The remaining medical waste is reportedly being collected by city corporation workers along with general waste, meaning half of the city's infectious waste is being improperly disposed of, further heightening public health risks.

During a recent visit to the city

corporation landfill at the Halishahar Anandabazar area, conservancy workers were seen dumping waste, while some people were collecting plastic materials from the landfill.

The incineration plant beside the landfill was not operational when this correspondent visited the site around noon. Medical waste in polythene bags was seen piled up and scattered along the road in front of the plant, with no visible signs of waste segregation.

Shimul Kanti Dey, foreman of the plant, said it usually operates for only three hours from 9:00am daily to avoid technical glitches.

"We can burn 750kg of medical waste a day in three hours, but around 1.5 tonnes of medical waste are brought in daily. The rest of the waste is kept on the ground in plastic bags," he said.

Asked about waste segregation, he said that earlier, medical waste used to be delivered after segregation at the source, but over the past eight months, waste has been brought in without any sorting.

"We have to burn all waste together in the plant at the highest 820 degrees Fahrenheit temperature," he added.

Contacted, Md Bokhtair, a director of Nagar Seba, said 150 of the 290 registered medical entities have signed memorandums of understanding with the company for waste collection and disposal.

"We collect 1.5 tonnes of medical waste daily. We realise monthly fees ranging from Tk 1,500 to Tk 20,000 from each entity for the service," he said.

He added that some public hospitals, including Chattogram General Hospital

and City Corporation Memon Hospital, have not signed MoUs with the company.

Asked about the issue, Dr Ekram Hossain, acting director of Chattogram General Hospital, confirmed that the hospital's waste is handed over to city corporation conservancy workers instead of a specialised service, adding that he would need to check records to explain the absence of an MoU.

Contacted, Dr Imam Hossain Rana, chief health officer of the city corporation, said he was unaware whether Memon Hospital had signed an MoU with Nagar Seba. "I would look into the matter," he said.

Mohammad Ismail, operations manager of Nagar Seba, said most facilities are ignoring the responsibility of waste segregation at the source.

"Waste segregation should be done at the source. However, only three hospitals – Parkview, Evercare and Imperial – provide medical waste after segregation. The rest of the hospitals and diagnostic centres provide waste without sorting," he said.

Dr Shakeel Ahmed stressed that waste segregation must begin at hospitals and diagnostic centres and called for greater accountability.

"If any hospital or diagnostic centre does not segregate medical waste at source, the city corporation or the collecting organisations should file complaints with health authorities against them," he said.

Contacted, Brig Gen Taslim Uddin, director of Chattogram Medical College Hospital, said medical waste segregation rules are supposed to be followed in every ward.

"I would look into whether the rules are being followed properly," he added.

Rohingya gang leader killed in gun attack at Teknaf camp

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A suspected armed robber was killed in a gun attack by a rival gang at the Nayapara Registered Rohingya Camp in Teknaf early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Nur Kamal, 25, leader of a Rohingya gang allegedly involved in criminal activities inside the camp. He was shot and stabbed during an attack following a long-standing rivalry over territorial control, according to law enforcers.

Additional Deputy Inspector General Md Kausar Sikder, commanding officer of the 16 Armed Police Battalion, said members of the Bangladeshi Khaliq gang carried out the attack, triggering an exchange of gunfire in the area.

At one stage, Nur Kamal sustained fatal injuries and later died at an NGO-run hospital inside the camp.

Both groups have long been involved in various criminal activities, including robbery and drug trafficking, he added.

Teknaf Model Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Saiful Islam said police recovered Nur Kamal's body from the camp yesterday morning.

Police records show Nur Kamal was accused in at least 11 cases, including murder, robbery, abduction, and drug-related offenses.

Annual urs at HC shrine held on a limited scale



DU CORRESPONDENT

The annual two day urs at the shrine of Hazrat Shah Khaza Sharfuddin Chishti located at the High Court premises in Dhaka was held on a limited scale this year as the traditional large gathering was postponed.

According to devotees, a committee comprising High Court judges oversees the urs, which usually draws followers from across the country, each year. Traditionally, the urs is observed with rituals, including full recitation of the Quran, zikr, dua, sermons, musical sessions, and food distribution among devotees. Musical events are usually held at the HC field adjacent to the shrine.

Talking to this correspondent, urs organisers said due to the upcoming national election and ongoing cases at the International Crimes Tribunal, the committee did not permit the programme to be held on a large scale.

This year, however, only the mandatory rituals were carried out in a limited capacity.

Law enforcers barricaded the HC gate on Friday, preventing followers from entering the shrine, which led to an altercation in front of the gate.

Ramna Zone Deputy Commissioner Masud Alam told The Daily Star that the decision to restrict entry was taken by the organising committee.

"We just did our job. When the followers were denied entry, they set fire in front of the High Court gate and staged a protest," he said.

Man stabbed to death while trying to prevent dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A man was stabbed to death while trying to stop a land dispute between two brothers in Barguna's Amtali upazila yesterday.

The victim, Jahirul Islam Sardar, 40, a cousin of the feuding brothers from Taktabunia village, was attacked around noon in front of their houses.

Police detained Mansur Sardar, 65, one of the brothers, and recovered the knife used in the killing.

According to police and locals, Mansur and his younger brother, Farid Sardar, had a dispute over 26 decimals of land for a long time. Several arbitration meetings failed to resolve the conflict.

Amtali Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Jahangir Hossain said the dispute escalated yesterday when Mansur allegedly chased Farid with a knife. Jahirul intervened to stop the attack but was stabbed.

Locals rushed him to Amtali Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared him dead.

Local arbitrator Md Limon Hawlader said the dispute had persisted for decades despite repeated mediation.

Jahirul's wife and mother demanded justice.

The body was sent to Barguna General Hospital morgue for autopsy, and police were preparing to file a case, the OC said.

Mob rule, shrinking freedom

FROM PAGE 3

members of civil society, their faces remain the same once they sit in the chair of power.

He said threats to free expression are no longer limited to formal state control. "Recently, we have seen supporters of private groups or political parties directly targeting media and cultural institutions with violence," he added.

Zillur criticised the state's inaction during arson attacks on the offices of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, calling them among the most shameful incidents in recent history.

He also cited the demolition of the historic Dhanmondi 32 residence as an example of state-enabled mob rule.

Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul said the interim government is under severe strain, revealing that three to four advisers had considered resigning due to what he described as unjust attacks, obscene abuse, and death threats.

He said they stayed on after Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus warned that even one resignation would weaken the entire administration.

Defending the government against what he termed as "heartless" criticism, Asif said it is currently the only entity without freedom of speech.

TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said mob culture did not arise on its own but was enabled by the state. He said extortion, tender manipulation and land grabbing have continued since the uprising,

with political parties still relying on "money, muscle and religion".

He also criticised amendments to the Human Rights Commission ordinance, saying a quietly added provision in December weakened the body.

Human rights activist Sara Hossain urged political parties to stop filing proxy defamation cases to silence critics. "Public figures must face criticism. Cases should not be filed unless there is a real threat to life," she said.

She called for urgent reform of colonial-era laws such as the Contempt of Court Act, the Sedition Act and provisions on hurting religious sentiments.

Sara also called on the media to speak out more strongly for colleagues still in detention.

Senior journalist Muktadir Rashid Romeo said the country has moved from "freedom of expression" to "freedom of the mob".

AB Party Joint Secretary Nasrin Sultana Milli warned that the upcoming election could become a "coffin-bearing election" due to voter fear.

Gono Odhikar Parishad Senior Vice President Faruk Hasan alleged the election is pre-engineered, claiming that the government, Election Commission, administration and police are aligned to ensure a specific outcome.

Pallab Changma, executive director of Kapaeng Foundation, said regime change has not ensured safety for

the country's 3-4 million indigenous people.

Islami Andolan Bangladesh leader Sheikh Fazlul Karim said human rights are often shaped by ideology rather than humanity, with mob violence emerging from suppressed public opinion.

CGS Executive Director Parvez Karim Abbasi, Jahangirnagar University Professor Abdul Latif Masum, Socialist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Bazlur Rashid Firoz, Gonoforum's Golam Mostofa, Barrister Shihab Uddin Khan and CPB leader Ragib Hossain Munna also spoke at the programme.

A particular party being favoured

FROM PAGE 3

a meeting with an election observation delegation led by European Union Chief Election Observer Ivars Ijabs.

He said the EU expects the polls to be free, fair, and competitive. The EU also wants all stakeholders to accept the results to ensure a smooth democratic transition, he added.

He said the EU delegation also assured the NCP of its cooperation during the meeting.

On the issue of a level playing field, Nahid said there is no confidence or consensus among political parties, including the NCP, that such an environment currently exists in the country. "We believe that by providing special facilities and government protocol to a particular political party, a form of signalling is taking place that may obstruct a

Bring the culprits to book

FROM PAGE 3

They said they firmly believe domestic and foreign instigators and patrons are also backing these acts.

The signatories also said they are observing with concern that the government is repeatedly failing to conduct prompt investigations and bring those responsible for killings, attacks and arson to justice.

They placed four demands – the immediate arrest and prosecution of those responsible for killing minority community members and attacking and burning their homes and the identification and punishment of instigators;

special measures by the interim government to protect minority homes, shops and all places of worship, including temples and churches; the issuance of special directives and increased monitoring to ensure the security of minorities and protect communal harmony; and joint initiatives by all mainstream political parties to resist such incidents by mobilising leaders, activists and supporters.

The signatories include Anu Muhammad, economist and former Jahangirnagar University professor; Sultana Kamal, rights activist; Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera

Kori; Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh; Rasheda K Chowdhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education; ZI Khan Panna, senior Supreme Court lawyer; Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation; Shamsul Huda, executive director of ALRD; and Md Nur Khan, rights activist.

The other signatories are: Dhaka University professors Samina Lutfah and Sumaiya Khayer; Robayet Ferdous and Zobaidda Nasreen; DU associate professor Tasnim Siraj Mahbub; senior Supreme Court lawyers Subrata Chowdhury and Tabarak Hossain; visiting professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science Swapna Adnan; BRAC University professor Ferdous Azim; Manindra Kumar Nath, acting general secretary of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad, writer and researcher Pavel Partha; Saleh Ahmed, general secretary of Sammilito Samajik Andolon; lawyer and human rights activist Parvez Hashem; Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, executive director of Coast Trust; Shah-e Mobin Jinnah, executive director of CDA; Zakir Hossain, chief executive of Nagorik Uddyog; Saidur Rahman, chief executive of Human Rights Cultural Foundation; rights activists Sayeed Ahmed and Dipayan Khisa; social worker Joba Talukder; researcher Ishita Dastagir; indigenous rights activist Meintin Promila; and Hana Shams Ahmed, a PhD researcher at York University, Canada.

initially declared valid.

He also alleged violations of election laws through poster displays and other campaign activities.

On security, he said fear and insecurity persist despite government initiatives and the deployment of security personnel. "The fear remains, especially as the killers of Sharif Osman Hadi and Farhad have not yet been arrested," he said.

Regarding seat-sharing, Nahid said the NCP's position would be clear within the next one or two days.

He said the Jamaat-NCP alliance is ahead in election preparations and has already begun campaigning in favour of a referendum.

Once the seat-sharing arrangement is finalised, he said, no major challenges would remain ahead of the election.



PHOTO: AFP

Anger grows as ICE hardens tactics

Nearly 6m without power, heat, or water in Russia


1 dead, 7 missing after migrant boat sinks off Turkey

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা স্থানীয় প্রকৃত শ্বেতাঙ্গার সমষ্টি বিক্রয় বাসালীসঙ্গে নির্কট থেকে ২০২৫-২৬ আর্থিক বৎসরের জন্য বিমান বাহিনীর (শারীরিক যোগ্যতা ক্লাস) ইউনিটসে ৩টি টাকার দলীয় জিজ্ঞাসা সমষ্টি প্রেরণ করা একটি ফর্ম এবং নির্দিষ্ট ব্যাঞ্চে দলপত্র আবেদন করা যাবে। নির্দিষ্ট বর্ণিত সালগণিতসঙ্গে মূলপত্রণ বা বাক্যে ভ্রান্তপ্রণ প্রদর্শন সাপেক্ষে দলপত্র ফর্ম ২,০০,০০০ টাকা বাজ (সহেরদলপত্র)। দল প্রদলপত্রসঙ্গে ০৮০০ খাতিয়া এবং ১১০০ খাতিয়া কর্তৃক শারীরিক যোগ্যতা ক্লাস, বিমান বাহিনী থারি থারি উত্তম এ কে খন্দকার, বাক্য সেন্সিটিভ এবং ২১ জাঙ্গারি ২০২৬ জাঙ্গারিও মধ্যে সাহের করা যাবে। দলপত্র আশানী ২২ জাঙ্গারি ২০২৬ জাঙ্গারিও সকল ০৮০০ খাতিয়া মধ্যে প্রতিটি শ্বেতাঙ্গার সমষ্টির শুল্কসহ অবশ্যাব্য শারীরিক যোগ্যতা ক্লাসের বর্ণনায় প্রদর্শন করা দিতে হবে এবং এ দিন ০৮০০ খাতিয়া দলপত্রসালগণের উপস্থিতিতে যেসি দলপত্র দলপত্রী উপস্থিতি থাকেন। খোলা হবে। দলপত্রের সাথে যাবে সার্কেল সাফিকিটে, জাতি বৈজ্ঞানিক, ম, টাইআই উপকরণ আয়ের কারণে হালদান সাফিকিটে, দারিক সন্দপত্র, দ্রুত সাইসঙ্গে যাবে গ্রাম প্রাণি প্রকজেষ্টেই অসিয়ার কর্তৃক সভারিতি এবং জামাত হিচাবে ২,০০,০০০০০ (টাকার বাক্য ভ্রান্তপ্রণ বেরদেখানো)। সর্বদর তরলি বিমান বাহিনী থারি এ কে খন্দকার এর অনুসঙ্গে করা দিতে হবে। দলপত্র খোলা পুর ১ম, ২২ ও ৩১ শুল্ক দলপত্রী জামাত বাহিনী বাক্য বাক্য জামাত দলপত্র খোলা পুর দিবে সেরা হবে। নির্বাচিত জামাতি সর্বদরহেলী টুডাজভাবে নির্বাচিত হওয়ার নির্দেশ দেয়া হবে। নির্বাচিত হওয়ার পুরে নির্বাচন জামাত হিচাবে ২,০০,০০০০০ টাকার বাক্য ভ্রান্তপ্রণ, সর্বদরকার তরলি বিমান বাহিনী থারি এ কে খন্দকার এর অনুসঙ্গে থারি হিচাবে প্রকজেষ্ট হেরে করা দিতে হবে। বা যাসালগে বেরদেখানো। উত্তম এবং হুজুরগে নির্বাচিত সর্বদরহেলী টুডাজ হেরে পুর আশিন ০২ জন দলপত্র জামাত বেরদেখা হবে। দলপত্র প্রেরণ পুর দলপত্রী বাক্য প্রদলপত্রী শরিশা/জিওর সলগেই অগ্রহণ করা সেরা নির্বাচন জামাত বাহিনী থারি করা হবে। সর্বদরকার শ্বেতাঙ্গার সমষ্টি থারি জে চেকের মাধ্যমে পরিশোধ করা হবে এবং সর্বদর থারি অগ্রহণী জাতি ও আয়ের কর্তৃক করা হবে। দলপত্র ওখণ্ড মান ও দলপত্র যাচাই সাপেক্ষে কর্তৃক যে কোন দলপত্র প্রদর্শন/বাহিনী করার ক্ষমতা সর্বদরকার করণ।

আইএসপিআর/বিমান/০১





Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
 Ministry of Home Affairs
 Office of the Directorate of Logistics
 Bangladesh Coast Guard Headquarters
 Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

Invitation for Tender

Director Logistics e-GP Invitation No. 44.08.2680.060.50.004.26.35

Date: 08 January 2026


e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the following procurement

Ser	Tender ID	Package name	Method	Date & time		
				Publication	Last selling	Closing and opening
1.	1209124	1. Purchase of Clothing Item Towel (Sailor) 2. Sample Submission: Bidder must submit 03 in number sample before tender opening time. No sample will be accepted after tender opening time. Without submitting sample bidder will be considered as "Non-Responsive" Provided sample is non-returnable & will be used for test.	OTM	11-01-2026 09:30am	25-01-2026 14:30pm	26-01-2026 12:30pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). For more details, please contact support desk contact numbers.

Documents can be downloaded till deadline of Tender/Application/Proposal submission.


Md. Shazzad Hossain Shakil
 Lt Commander BN
 Asst: Director Logistics (Stores)
 Bangladesh Coast Guard

‘American?’ NO!’ Says Greenland

AFP, Nuuk

Greenland’s political parties said they did not want to be under Washington as US President Donald Trump again suggested using force to seize the mineral-rich Danish autonomous territory, raising concern worldwide.

The statement late Friday came after Trump repeated that Washington was “going to do something on Greenland, whether they like it or not”.

European capitals have been scrambling to come up with a coordinated response after the White House said this week that Trump wanted to buy Greenland and refused to rule out military action.

“We don’t want to be Americans, we don’t want to be Danish, we want to be Greenlanders,” the leaders of five parties in Greenland’s parliament said in a joint statement.

“The future of Greenland must be decided by Greenlanders.”

“No other country can meddle in this. We must decide our country’s future ourselves — without pressure to make a hasty decision, without procrastination, and without interference from other countries,” they underscored.

Julius Nielsen, a 48-year-old fisherman in the capital Nuuk, told AFP: “American, no! We were a colony for so many years. We’re not ready to be a colony again, to be colonised”.

A Danish colony until 1953, Greenland gained home rule 26 years later and is contemplating eventually loosening its ties with Denmark.

The coalition currently in power is not in favour of a hasty independence. The only opposition party, Naleraq, which won 24.5 percent of the vote in the 2025 legislative elections, wants to cut ties as quickly as possible but it is also a signatory of the joint declaration.

Greenland has attracted international attention in recent years for its vast natural resources including rare earth minerals and estimates that it could possess huge oil and gas reserves.

A flurry of diplomacy is under way as Europeans try to head off a crisis while at the same time avoiding the wrath of Trump, who is nearing the end of his first year back in power.

Trump had offered to buy Greenland in 2019 during his first presidential term but was rebuffed.

The head of Nato’s forces in Europe, US General Alexis Grynkewich, said Friday the military alliance was far from being in “a crisis”, following Trump’s threats.



Residents of the Sheikh Maqsud neighbourhood, react as they are escorted out of the harms way by the members of Syrian government security forces, in Aleppo yesterday. Syria’s army said it had completed a “security sweep” of a neighbourhood in Aleppo where it clashed with Kurdish forces, who denied losing control of the area after defying calls to surrender.

PHOTO: AFP

‘US needs to own Greenland’

Trump says if US doesn’t, China Russia will occupy it; Danish PM says invasion would end Nato

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump on Friday again suggested the use of force to seize Greenland as he brushed aside Denmark’s sovereignty over the autonomous Arctic island.

“We are going to do something on Greenland, whether they like it or not,” Trump said at a White House meeting with oil executives looking to benefit in Venezuela, where the United States last week overthrew the president.

“I would like to make a deal, you know, the easy way. But if we don’t do it the easy way, we’re going to do it the hard way,” Trump said when asked of Greenland.

Trump says controlling the mineral-rich island is crucial for US national security given the rising military activity of Russia and China in the Arctic.

“We’re not going to have Russia or China occupy Greenland. That’s what they’re going to do if we don’t.”

US already has a military presence on the island under a 1951 agreement. The island of 57,000 people is an autonomous territory of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Both China and Russia have increased military activity in the Arctic region in recent years, but neither has laid any claim to the vast icy island.

“You defend ownership. You don’t defend leases. And we’ll have to defend Greenland. If we don’t do it, China or Russia will,” Trump said.



Trump and White House officials have been discussing various plans to bring Greenland under US control, including potential use of the US military and lump sum payments to Greenlanders as part of a bid to convince them to secede from Denmark and potentially join the US.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has warned that an invasion of Greenland would end “everything,” meaning Nato and the post-World War II security structure.

Trump made light of the concerns of Denmark, a steadfast US ally that joined the United States in the controversial 2003 invasion of Iraq.

“I’m a fan of Denmark, too, I have to tell you. And you know, they’ve been very nice to me,” Trump said.

“But you know, the fact that they had a boat land there 500 years ago doesn’t mean that they own the land.”

Secretary of State Marco Rubio is due to meet next week with Denmark’s foreign minister and representatives from Greenland.

Leaders in Copenhagen and throughout Europe have reacted with disdain in recent days to comments by Trump and other White House officials asserting their right to Greenland. The US and Denmark are NATO allies bound by a mutual defense agreement.

On Tuesday, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, Britain and Denmark issued a joint statement, saying only Greenland and Denmark can decide matters regarding their relations.

REUTERS, Copenhagen

When US Secretary of State Marco Rubio meets his Danish and Greenlandic counterparts next week, Denmark will be defending a territory that has been moving steadily away from it and towards independence since 1979.

President Donald Trump’s threats to seize Greenland have triggered a wave of European solidarity with Denmark. But the crisis has exposed an uncomfortable reality - Denmark is rallying support to protect a territory whose population wants independence, and whose largest opposition party now wants to bypass Copenhagen and negotiate directly with Washington.

“Denmark risks exhausting its foreign policy capital to secure Greenland, only to watch it walk away afterwards,” said Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, a political science professor at University of Copenhagen.

Denmark cannot let Greenland go without losing its geopolitical relevance in the Arctic territory, strategically located between Europe and North America and a critical site for the US ballistic missile defence system.

Yet it may ultimately have nothing to show for its efforts if Greenlanders choose independence -- or strike their own deal with Washington.

The stakes extend beyond Denmark’s national interests. European allies have rallied behind Denmark not just out of solidarity, but because giving up Greenland would set a dangerous precedent



that could embolden other powers to pursue territorial claims against smaller nations, upending the post-1945 world order.

Denmark’s foreign ministry declined to comment, but referred to joint remarks by Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Greenlandic Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen on December 22.

“National borders and the sovereignty of states are rooted in international law,” the two leaders said. “They are fundamental principles. You cannot annex another country ... Greenland belongs to the Greenlanders.”

For now, the Trump administration says all options are on the table, including buying the territory or taking it by force.

Copenhagen professor Rasmussen said any discussion of whether holding on to Greenland is worth the cost has been drowned

out by outrage at Trump’s threats.

“It is not part of the political debate in Denmark. I fear we have gone into patriotic overdrive,” he said.

During the Cold War, Greenland’s strategic location gave Denmark outsized influence in Washington and allowed it to maintain lower defence spending than would otherwise be expected of a Nato ally.

This became known as “the Greenland Card”, according to a 2017 report by the University of Copenhagen’s Centre for Military Studies.

But Greenland’s aspirations for self-determination have been brewing since the former colony got greater autonomy and its own parliament in 1979. A 2009 agreement explicitly recognised Greenlanders’ right to independence if they choose.

Copenhagen provides an annual block grant of roughly 4.3 billion Danish crowns (\$610 million) to Greenland’s economy, which is near stagnation with GDP growth of just 0.2 percent in 2025.

Prime Minister Frederiksen faces a difficult balancing act, said Serafima Andreeva, researcher at Oslo-based Fridtjof Nansen Institute.

For now, Denmark has little choice but to stand firm to maintain its diplomatic credibility, but in doing so risks the relationship with the United States at a time “when Russia is an accelerating threat and being on the US’s bad side is no good for anyone in the West”.



People take part in a vigil after a US immigration agent shot and killed 37-year-old Renee Nicole Good in her car in Minneapolis, in New York City, US, on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

US INTERVENTION Colombia’s rebel leader calls for guerrilla unity

REUTERS, Bogota

The head of the largest dissident branch of the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla group called on other rebel groups to come together to fight US interventionism in the region, in a video message confirmed by the group as authentic on Friday.

The call from leader Nestor Gregorio Vera follows the US incursion into neighboring Venezuela, which resulted in the capture of President Nicolas Maduro.

“The shadow of the interventionist eagle looms over everyone equally. We urge you to put aside these differences,” Vera said in a video in which he appeared dressed in camouflage.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro - a former guerrilla who vowed to bring peace to the country after more than six decades of internal armed conflict - is set to meet US President Donald Trump in Washington in February.

The planned meeting comes days after Trump threatened Colombia with military action. Trump has repeatedly accused the administration of Petro, without evidence, of enabling a steady flow of cocaine into the US, imposing sanctions on the Colombian leader in October.

“Destiny is calling us to unite. We are not scattered forces, we are heirs to the same cause. Let us weave unity through action and forge the great insurgent bloc that will push back the enemies of the greater homeland,” Vera added in the video addressed to other rebel groups.

DENMARK’S GREENLAND DILEMMA Defending a territory already on its way out

REUTERS, Copenhagen

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Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Public Administration
Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka
www.mopa.gov.bd

No: 05.00.0000.113.07.072.2025-25Date : 08-1-2026

e-Tender Notice No. 5/2025-26

Ministry of Public Administration of Bangladesh invites the Flowing tender in the National e-GP Portal:

Sl	Tender Id	Name of Supply	Publishing Date and Time	Closing Date and Time
1	1209143	Electrical Equipment	11 January 2026 & 10.00	26 January 2026 & 14.00

This is an online Tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-tender, registration in the National e-Gp portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender document from the National e-GP System Portal should be deposited on-line through any registered Bank.

Further Information and Guidelines are Available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP Helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

08.01.26
Md. Saifuddin Gias
Senior Assistant Secretary
Ministry of Public Administration
Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.
Phone: 2226641500

GD-71

Young voters will decide the winner

Parties must commit to a better future for the youth post-polls

There is little doubt that young voters are a decisive demographic force, particularly in the context of the upcoming general election that people expect to be free and fair. With 5.56 crore out of 12.76 crore voters—about 44 percent—being between 18 and 37 years of age, young people make up nearly half of the electorate. They could, therefore, end up deciding the outcome of the February 12 election, making it all the more crucial for political parties to connect with their thought processes and expectations from a future government.

Unlike the last three elections, widely regarded as farcical or non-competitive, this election follows the youth-led uprising of July 2024 and will be conducted under a non-political interim government committed to reform, justice for crimes committed under the Awami League regime, and credible polls. Having been denied meaningful voting opportunities in 2014, 2018, and 2024 due to intimidation and rigging, young voters are participating seriously for the first time in many years. The apathy of the past has been transformed into a determination to reclaim their right to vote, as recent surveys have also demonstrated. One survey by the Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre found that 97 percent of respondents aged 18 to 35 intend to vote. Another survey, conducted by the International Republican Institute, found that 89 percent of respondents were likely or somewhat likely to vote.

Young voters link voting to real life issues and concerns, one of the most pressing being the number of jobless graduates. Bangladesh had nearly nine lakh unemployed graduates in 2024, according to the Labour Force Survey 2024 released by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). Young voters want to know how the next government will tackle unemployment, improve the quality of education, reduce the cost of living, provide security to citizens, eliminate corruption, establish good governance and accountability, etc.

Political parties, therefore, must appeal to them with sincere and credible commitments. Universities are powerful spaces capable of shaping and influencing national politics. Recent student council elections in major universities have shown that youth groups who were able to connect meaningfully with the general students secured the largest victories. The BNP's student wing, by contrast, suffered repeated defeats, indicating that the party needs to work harder to appeal to the youth. Young people want an end to the status quo in which the state remains unaccountable, ordinary citizens feel powerless, and corruption erodes basic rights. Young women, in particular, will vote for a safer Bangladesh, one in which they can participate fully in all aspects of public life. Political parties must align themselves with these aspirations.

We believe that the country's democratic transition largely depends on youth turnout. With nearly half of the electorate being young, their participation will be the real test of whether Bangladesh is entering a new democratic phase. It will also determine whether, after years of erosion, public trust in elections can be restored.

A sheer waste of public resources

Activate non-operational health facilities, deliver services to local communities

It is quite concerning that at least 80 government health facilities across 18 districts have remained non-operational for years, reflecting persistent systemic failures in healthcare governance. According to a report by this daily, of these facilities, 17 are hospitals (including four children's hospitals), 14 are community clinics, and 12 are extensions to existing hospitals, while the rest comprise structures such as quarters for health workers. Built over years at enormous public expense, these facilities remain unused due to shortages of manpower, lack of equipment, and bureaucratic delays. As a result, basic healthcare services are being disrupted in these districts.

One such facility is the 20-bed hospital in Gazipur's Talia village. Built at a cost of around Tk 20 crore in 2020, it remains unutilised to this day. A local family even donated two acres of land in good faith in the hope of ensuring access to medical services that never materialised. Similar situations exist in Rangpur, Madaripur, Savar, and other districts, where completed facilities continue to lie idle. Several trauma centres, meant to respond to the rising incidence of road accidents, remain non-functional, while the children's hospitals stand empty despite paediatric wards elsewhere struggling under pressure. In some cases, facilities have remained unused for over a decade.

Health ministry documents obtained by *The Daily Star* show that the construction of 41 facilities was completed by 2024, while the rest were built earlier. The documents cite lack of manpower, equipment, and medicines as the main reasons for their continued non-operation. This raises a fundamental question: why were these structures built without a comprehensive operational plan? Constructing them without ensuring staff recruitment, budgetary allocation, and service readiness reflects a serious disconnect between infrastructure development and healthcare delivery. That some of the facilities were built even without feasibility studies further underscores how poor planning and weak accountability have plagued the sector. The consequences have been undoubtedly severe, as patients in rural and semi-urban areas are forced to travel long distances to already overstretched hospitals, incurring high costs and risking dangerous delays in treatment.

Decades of inefficiency, mismanagement, and corruption have thus rendered large parts of our health sector incapable of delivering essential services. Restoring order to this ailing sector requires proper planning, coordination, and accountability at every stage—something that we have, unfortunately, yet to see under the interim administration. We urge the health authorities to urgently audit all idle facilities, fast-track recruitment and staff deployment, and hold those responsible for non-functional projects to account. We also hope the next elected government will prioritise the sector and implement the reform proposals put forward by the Health Sector Reform Commission to build an efficient, accountable, and people-oriented healthcare system.

EDITORIAL

Repeated rail freight failures are no longer acceptable



Ahamedul Karim Chowdhury
is adjunct faculty at Bangladesh Maritime University
and former head of the Kamalapur Inland Container
Depot (ICD) and the Pangaon Inland Container
Terminal under Chittagong Port Authority.

AHAMEDUL KARIM CHOWDHURY

Every few years, Bangladesh Railway's (BR) container services collapse under the same explanation: a shortage of locomotives. Each time, the consequences extend far beyond the railyard, reaching factories, ports, shipping lines, and buyer offices overseas. The most recent disruption between Chattogram Port and Dhaka's Kamalapur Inland Container Depot (ICD), widely reported in the press, is not an isolated operational failure. It is the predictable outcome of a system that still does not fully appreciate what international cargo logistics require: predictability over promises.

I spent more than a decade working at ICD Kamalapur, for much of that period heading the facility on behalf of the Chittagong Port Authority. During those years, locomotive crises occurred repeatedly. Each episode disrupted container movements between Chattogram and Dhaka, undermined service schedules, and gradually eroded customer confidence. The pattern has never fundamentally changed—only the scale of the damage.

Railway officials often argue that they have little choice but to prioritise passenger trains due to political and social sensitivities. While that reality cannot be ignored, it also exposes a core contradiction. Container freight generates significantly higher revenue than passenger services, yet freight operations are consistently the first to be sacrificed whenever resources are constrained. Short-term optics continue to override long-term economic logic, even though the costs of that decision are borne by exporters and, ultimately, by the national economy.

For international cargo, particularly exports, reliability is non-negotiable. Global supply chains operate on fixed shipping windows, vessel cut-off times, and contractual delivery obligations. If transport services are not predictable, exporters will not use them—regardless of price or stated capacity. This is precisely what happened at ICD Kamalapur.

Once the ICD failed to provide scheduled and dependable rail services, exporters—especially from the ready-made garments sector—began to withdraw. Volumes declined sharply. Regaining those users proved far more difficult than attracting new ones would have been. In logistics, trust is cumulative but fragile; once broken, it does not return easily.



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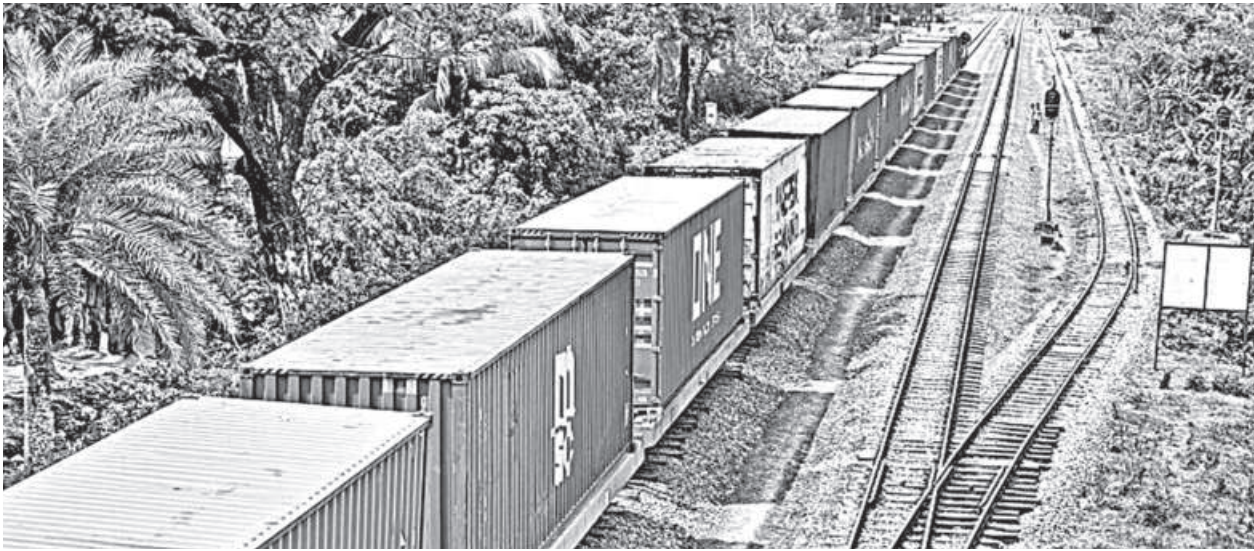
SHAJEDA AKTER MONI

During the still hours of the morning before daylight, some women in Dhaka take to the streets to perform a vital task. They sweep roads, drains, and clear open areas of rubbish to keep the city healthy and habitable. They do not alter great destinies, perhaps, but they frame everyday life in meaningful ways, yet their work goes unobserved, although it is worthy of appreciation.

These women keep our city clean, safe, and clear for its constituents, despite the challenges they face due to climate change. In Dhaka, the rising heat makes every outdoor task a test of endurance and determination. Studies have found that dehydration and health stress are common among women engaged in informal work, such as waste picking and street cleaning, who often spend long hours at dangerous levels of heat exposure. However, they continue doing what they must, no less dutifully.

Since garbage buildup leads to disease, clogged drains during monsoons and cause traffic hazards, these women address these risks before

Today, the RMG sector barely uses ICD Kamalapur for exports and does not use it at all for imports. The ICD's remaining users are primarily commercial importers, whose decisions are influenced less by transit reliability and more by customs administration behaviour. When customs enforcement is strict, import volumes shrink; when it is more accommodating, volumes flow despite delays and inefficiencies. These users tend to be price-insensitive and, as a result, they rarely raise formal complaints. Their tolerance has masked deeper structural failures.



'Exports run on predictability. Our railways must learn to do the same.'

FILE PHOTO: STAR

Exporters operate under entirely different constraints. RMG shipments are time-sensitive, buyer-driven, and penalty-exposed. A missed sailing can result in airfreight costs, order cancellations, or loss of buyer confidence. For such exporters, an ICD that cannot guarantee train schedules is not a support mechanism but a risk.

This is particularly unfortunate because ICD Kamalapur possesses a critical structural advantage for exports. Once containers are stuffed and sealed at the ICD, they move directly into Chattogram port terminals without intermediate handling. The risk of pilferage in transit is virtually nonexistent, barring extraordinary situations within restricted port areas. This should have made the ICD a preferred gateway for garment exports. Security, however, cannot compensate for uncertainty.

under a public-private partnership involving Shasha Denim and Incontrade, reportedly under a design, build, finance, operate, maintain and transfer (DBFOT) model. These developments suggest that new financing and operating structures are being considered. Yet, whether an ICD is built at Dhirasram, Pubail, or Ghorashal, its success will not be determined primarily by location or contractual form. It will depend on whether it is operated as a genuine logistics enterprise, with enforceable service standards, professional management, and insulation from ad hoc operational decisions.

If new ICDs are run under the same institutional assumptions that have constrained Kamalapur—where passenger trains routinely get priority over freight services—then larger yards and modern equipment will deliver

little improvement. Infrastructure alone does not create reliability. Governance does.

Any future ICD intended to serve the RMG sector must offer scheduled block trains, guaranteed cut-off times, transparent disruption management, and full integration with customs and port systems. It must be accountable to its users. Only under such conditions will exporters consider rail a dependable component of their supply chains.

Equally important is location. Kamalapur's constraints are no longer limited to rail capacity; they are geographic and structural. Situated in the heart of Dhaka, it is encircled by severe road congestion, restricted truck movement, and zero scope for expansion. Any new ICD must be outside the city core, connected to bypass roads, and designed to support uninterrupted cargo flows.

If these principles are applied, a professionally operated ICD—whether public, private, or PPP—could finally align rail transport with the needs of exporters, creating the path for the

RMG sector to return to rail and rely on it.

This, however, requires BR to confront its central contradiction. Freight cannot continue to be treated as expendable. As long as locomotives assigned to container services can be withdrawn at short notice to cover passenger shortfalls, no ICD will earn the trust of time-sensitive exporters. That is not simply a logistical misfortune; it is a policy failure.

Repeating that failure at new locations would be far more costly. The question facing policymakers is no longer whether Bangladesh needs more ICDs. It is whether Bangladesh is prepared to operate them as international trade infrastructure, rather than as peripheral extensions of a passenger-focused railway.

Exports run on predictability. Our railways must learn to do the same.

Why women cleaners deserve recognition in city planning

because they are the key agents in responding to those hazards. The National Action Plan on climate change should prioritise the health of women and children, and take into consideration community-based adaptation actions. Such recognition at the national policy level can be strengthened through the inclusion of street cleaners in planning and resource allocation.

In fact, there is evidence that women at the grassroots are leading the way to climate adaptation interventions by creating seed banks, agri-resilience, and promoting and practicing safe birthing during natural disasters, as health and food security are at risk. This shows that community-based female action has value and that women acting outside formal authority can make a real difference to climate resilience.

This notion is directly applicable to the women street cleaners in Dhaka. Although they do not directly organise climate-resilient projects, their daily work keeps dangers at bay and ensures environmental well-being. Therefore, they should be integrated into climate action plans. They need to gain tangible benefits and clear standards of recognition and be valued in accordance with the Women, Peace, and Security principles. This would make their contributions meaningful.

Urban planning should also incorporate these women. Policy interventions can include shaded rest spaces, vending sites, or cleaning

points with water facilities, portable toilet stalls, shelter, providing kits of protective equipment and access to healthcare during heatwaves.

By recognising and empowering the women who are sweeping Dhaka and keeping it clean, the city will demonstrate its commitment to values founded on dignity, equity and interdependence.

But recognition cannot, of itself, be the end of the line. Real inclusion would mean that women cleaners are considered in the vision of Dhaka as a smart, climate-resilient, and peaceful megacity. With the government aggressively pushing to realise ambitious projects for greener roads, digital services and inclusive growth, it is time to simultaneously integrate the potential of women cleaners in city planning. Trees planted along their morning routes, water stations to keep them hydrated, and sanitation facilities would be much more than infrastructure; these would be a true demonstration of care and respect.

WPS agenda expands the vision of what "peace" means, challenging states to see peace as everyday actions that are safer and fairer for both genders. In Bangladesh, such visions led women to join peacekeeping, disaster resilience and grassroots leadership. Extending this culture to the women street sweepers is a natural next step. In acknowledging them, Dhaka can demonstrate a new definition of humanity, security, and prosperity.

Remembering Khaleda Zia, her legal ordeal, and the courts that failed her



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IMRAN A SIDDIQ

The immense gathering on the final day of 2025 for the janaza prayers of Begum Khaleda Zia marked a historic moment as millions came to pay their last respects to her. Overflowing the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban grounds, mourners filled surrounding neighbourhoods, streets, rooftops, and even the subway. It was a spontaneous, unchoreographed expression of love and grief for a leader who had sacrificed her life for democracy. Standing in the lush green fields adjacent to the South Plaza, I found myself reflecting on Khaleda Zia's life of public service, firm resolve, and quiet sacrifice, and on the dignity with which she had endured years of struggle against autocracy.

As a practising member of the bar association, I witnessed—and participated in—numerous politically charged legal proceedings during the 15 years of Awami League's authoritarian rule. I was familiar with Khaleda Zia's cases and had the opportunity to discuss them with the late former attorney general, A. J. Mohammad Ali, who had represented her in all major legal proceedings. A neighbour of ours, Mr Ali often shared details of these cases, particularly his harrowing experiences during the Bakshibazar trials. It was clear that the system was rigged against her. Once the executive decided to prosecute, her fate was sealed. Yet Mr Ali remained resolute, once telling me, “We will keep going to court. We will keep knocking on their doors. They may turn us away, but we will come back again.”

The Zia Orphanage Trust case was perhaps the most high profile case against Khaleda Zia, yet a review of the facts reveals its tenuous foundation. She was accused of



‘There is no doubt that the legal system failed Khaleda Zia. Its inability to deliver justice in a fair and impartial manner is a sobering reminder of how far Bangladesh still has to go to achieve true judicial independence.’

FILE PHOTO: STAR

misappropriating funds from the “Prime Minister's Orphanage Fund” during her tenure from 1991 to 1996. The defence argued that the fund had never been entrusted to her and that, absent such entrustment, no charge of criminal misappropriation could stand. Evidence showed that the funds were donated by the Emir of Kuwait directly to the trust—facts fatal to the prosecution. Despite this, she was convicted and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. On appeal, the High Court Division, in

Trust—with Khaleda Zia as the managing trustee and her two sons as trustees. Khaleda Zia was charged under section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act as a “public servant,” despite the trust being a private trust within the meaning of the Trust Act. Ordinarily, such proceedings would have been quashed as an abuse of process, as the admitted facts disclosed no offence against her. Yet Khaleda Zia was tried, convicted, and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment by a

special court. The Niko graft case further illustrated how the legal system was weaponised against her. In 1998, after failing to secure a tender, the Canadian company Niko Resources submitted a proposal to then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to extract gas from Bangladesh. In 2001, the Hasina government directed that a

Zia over the Niko deal. In 2010, the High Court quashed the corruption proceedings against Sheikh Hasina. Yet in 2015, in broadly similar proceedings against Khaleda Zia, the High Court held that there was no legal bar to prosecuting her. A few years later, the presiding judge of the relevant High Court bench was elevated to the Appellate Division,

Medical) University authorities for appropriate treatment.” The court did not even address the proviso to section 497(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which allows preferential bail treatment for women and infirm persons accused of non-bailable offences.

It ultimately took a revolution, the loss of over a thousand lives, and the reconstitution of the Supreme Court to correct these injustices. In November 2024, the High Court Division set aside Khaleda Zia's conviction in the Zia Charitable Trust case. Shortly thereafter, in January 2025, the Appellate Division allowed her appeal in the Zia Orphanage Trust case, holding the proceedings to be a “manifestly contrived misapplication of the law” amounting to “malicious prosecution.”

By the time Khaleda Zia was released, the damage to her health was irreversible. Years of incarceration, isolation, and denial of proper medical care had taken a devastating toll. The judiciary, constitutionally bound to protect fundamental rights, had instead acted at the behest of the executive, aided by a complicit Attorney General's Office and Anti-Corruption Commission. Judges lacking moral courage and prosecutors driven by political loyalty ensured that she remained imprisoned and unable to seek treatment abroad for what was once a manageable condition.

There is no doubt that the legal system had failed Khaleda Zia. It is difficult to comprehend how a former prime minister—elderly and gravely ill—was denied bail while her appeal remained pending before the Supreme Court. Those who relentlessly pursued her conviction displayed a lack of professional judgement and a readiness to serve partisan interests. The apex court's handling of her case, clearly shaped by the then prime minister's determination to politically eliminate Begum Zia, marks one of its darkest chapters. Its inability to deliver justice in a fair, impartial, and dispassionate manner is a sobering reminder of how far Bangladesh still has to go to achieve true judicial independence.

superseding several senior judges. As these proceedings dragged on, Khaleda Zia was repeatedly denied bail. In the Zia Orphanage Trust case, a medical board report was placed before the apex court stating that “her rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is highly active, with advanced deformities and marked functional decline.” Despite the seriousness of her condition, the Appellate Division denied her bail, observing instead that “she should cooperate with the (Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib

How modern wind turbine technology can reshape Bangladesh's energy future

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SUDEPTO ROY and ISRAT HOSSAIN

Bangladesh, a developing economy heavily reliant on fossil fuels, is entering a critical phase of its energy journey amid rising energy demand and environmental challenges. The power sector, being the largest consumer of natural gas in the country, not only contributes to greenhouse gas emissions but also incurs high energy import costs, as evident in the 13.86 percent surge in LNG imports in FY2024-25. Thus, wind power is becoming a more practical choice as Bangladesh moves towards renewable energy sources.

Bangladesh has considerable potential for wind energy resources. However, the development of the wind energy sector is experiencing slow growth due to a challenging regulatory situation and investment uncertainty. Currently, there are 15 wind energy projects either in operation or in the planning stages, with a total capacity of 777.902 MWp, according to the SREDA. Bangladesh's first commercial wind power plant began its full-scale operation in March 2024. This marked a significant milestone for Bangladesh in its

capacity in Chandpur and Feni.

The wind energy sector is undergoing a major transformation due to recent revolutionary innovations in the way wind is harnessed for electricity generation, which also reduces costs. The recent developments are not only translating into higher efficiencies, but they are also bringing wind power closer to accessibility and affordability than ever. Optimisation of turbines for aerodynamic performance is highlighted as a key research theme in wind technology today. An increase in turbine efficiency is achieved via improved blade design and materials used. New blade designs provide an optimal aerodynamic profile that captures more wind energy over a wider range of wind speeds.

Notable advancements such as variable pitch and twist technologies enable blades to continuously vary to changing wind conditions over their entire span, optimising performance, minimising mechanical loads, and increasing their longevity. At present, the shift towards advanced materials is crucial. Today, most turbine blades are made of composite materials such as fibreglass and carbon fibre with good strength-to-weight ratios. This progress enables building larger blades that can capture more wind energy whilst also extending operational lifetime and reducing maintenance costs. Modern



FILE PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVU

‘Currently, there are 15 wind energy projects either in operation or in the planning stages, with a total capacity of 777.902 MWp.’

One way to overcome limitations associated with regions with lower wind resources, such as Bangladesh, is a concept called “Low Wind”, which uses special turbines for low wind speeds. The goal of this design is to produce power when traditional windfarms are not doing so, and eliminate the “cannibalisation effect” responsible for making electricity less expensive when suddenly all farms produce renewable energy at the same time, thus driving down prices. Low Wind turbines are identified by their very long blades to optimise power at the lowest wind speed, and low cut-out speed around 12–13 metres per second.

Bangladesh can take advantage of the state-of-the-art technologies in wind turbines to enhance its renewable energy capacity. According to a detailed study conducted in 2018 by the US Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Bangladesh has wind energy potential of at

least 30,000MW. The coastline is 710 km, and in the southwest lies the Sundarbans mangrove and in the southeast the Saint Martin's coral island. Since fixed wind turbines cannot be installed in the Bay of Bengal, floating wind farms can be positioned further out from shore. If we build seaside windfarms, for instance, using 153-metre blades, we could supply energy to a lot of homes simultaneously. Residential areas are best suited for bladeless turbines. They are easily manageable because they are small, quiet, and less demanding.

The adoption of wind power is expected to speed up the development trajectory for Bangladesh, as it will not only be a green energy source for households but also a powerhouse for the national economy. The growing wind power industry is also expected to nurture a new generation of trained workers, from engineers and maintenance staff to power managers, another factor contributing to the country's development.

Also, the environmental benefits of wind power go far beyond simply reducing carbon emissions. With an increasing demand and production of wind farms, the country will rely less on imported fossil fuels. This shift promises much cleaner air because burning coal releases toxic pollutants such as sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, which conventional power plants continuously spew into the atmosphere daily.

Although there may still be some reliance on traditional sources in the short term, every step forward is crucial. The wind energy sector's coming-of-age can mean a solid green footing for a cleaner future and a better way of life in Bangladesh. In fact, we can lead the way in the deployment of advanced wind technologies with floating offshore farms and low-wind turbines, thus creating energy independence, new industries, and sustainable economic development, while ensuring a large reduction in national emissions.

transition towards renewable energy. Other projects are underway, including the 100 MW Anwara Wind Power in Chittagong, which is currently in the planning stages. This is expected to make to a significant contribution to the country's renewable energy capacity by 2035. In addition, the 100 MW Wind Power Plant in Matarbari is set to be completed in 2026. Plans are also underway for wind power plants with lower

wind turbine towers now exceed heights of 160 metres, enabling the deployment of large rotors with diameters of up to 150 metres that can access stronger and more consistent winds at higher altitudes. Meanwhile, the use of segmented blades, which can be converted into long blades to improve the energy capture per turbine, reduces the cost of transportation, a key factor in lowering installation costs.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Curtains rise on DIFF

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

The 24th **Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF)** officially began yesterday at the main auditorium of the Bangladesh National Museum, marking the start of a ten-day celebration of world cinema under the theme “Nandanik Chalachitra, Mononshil Darshok, Alokito Shomaj” (Aesthetic Films, Discerning Audience, Enlightened Society).

The opening ceremony brought together filmmakers, diplomats, artistes, and cinephiles, turning the venue into a vibrant hub of cultural exchange. Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Adviser for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Water Resources, and Information and Broadcasting, attended the event as the chief guest. Croatian filmmaker Aleksandra Marković and Li Xiaopeng, Cultural Counselor at the Chinese Embassy in Bangladesh, were among the distinguished international guests. Jalal Ahmed, Executive Member of the Festival Committee, presided over the ceremony.

Speaking at the event, Syeda Rizwana Hasan highlighted the importance of cinema as a space for social interaction in an increasingly demanding life. “Life has become so tough that we hardly find time for social interaction. If I receive the festival schedule, I will definitely try to attend at least one or two screenings,” she said.

She also stressed the need for environmental

responsibility, particularly in relation to the festival's special open-air screenings at Cox's Bazar. Emphasising that Laboni Beach is an ecologically fragile area, she urged organisers and audiences to avoid excessive lighting and refrain from using single-use plastic. The adviser further encouraged filmmakers and organisers to prioritise environmental themes.

Li Xiaopeng, Cultural Counselor at the Chinese Embassy, described cinema as a universal language. He praised DIFF for building cultural bridges over the years and expressed satisfaction over the Chinese Film Week, which features 13 Chinese films of diverse themes and styles. “We hope this initiative inspires cooperation, friendship, and meaningful dialogue among filmmakers,” he said.

Croatian filmmaker Aleksandra Marković commended Bangladeshi cinema for its strong storytelling tradition and emerging contemporary voices. “Bangladesh cinema has a powerful presence. I am committed to promoting Bangladeshi films and filmmakers internationally and supporting opportunities for global collaboration,” she said.

The evening also featured lively cultural performances by Theatrical Company and the Jol Torongo Dance Crew. The festival's first screening began at 5:30 pm with the Chinese film **Wu Jin Zhi Lu** (The Journey to No End), directed by Chen Xiang, followed by the Iranian drama **Without Me** by Mohammad Asadania at 7 pm.

Film screenings will take place across multiple venues in Dhaka, including the Bangladesh National Museum, Kabi Sufia Kamal Auditorium, National Art Gallery, National Theatre Hall at Shilpakala Academy, Alliance Française de Dhaka, and Stamford University Bangladesh auditoriums.

For the first time, DIFF is also extending its reach to the coast with open-air screenings at Laboni Beach in Cox's Bazar from January 10 to 18, organised by the Bangladesh Tourism Board, allowing audiences to experience world cinema against the backdrop of the sea.

Complementing the film screenings, a visual art exhibition is being held from January 9 to 17 at the 3D Art Gallery of the Bangladesh Military Museum. Curated by Lutfia Mahmuda, the exhibition features work by 10 renowned Bangladeshi artistes and explores the intersection of cinema and visual art.

This year's festival showcases 245 films from 91 countries, including Bangladesh, across a wide range of sections such as Asian Film Competition, Retrospective, Wide Angle, Bangladesh Panorama, Cinema of the World, Children's Film Session, Women Filmmakers, Short and Independent Films, and Spiritual Films.

The 24th **Dhaka International Film Festival** will continue until January 18, offering audiences an expansive and diverse cinematic experience.

Brushstrokes Across Generations: Inside a father-daughter exhibition



PHOTOS: ABRAR FAIYAZ NILOY

FAIZA RAMIM

Brushstrokes Across Generations, a father and daughter painting exhibition, was inaugurated on January 9 at SHALA Neighbourhood Art Space, Alok. The event was conceived as more than a display of finished works. A projector ran audiovisual material and portfolios created specifically for the occasion, supported by thoughtful food

literary portraits, each shaped by sensory memory and the ethics of attention. In **Lotus Head**, she returns to a childhood moment of near drowning, a scene of sudden fear and helplessness in deep water. Over time, the water becomes a recurring metaphor, but it transforms.

She has a clear sense of what makes a person feel unmistakably themselves. For her, identity is preserved in the small, faithful details that outlast time. In **Dadu**, it is the cigarette, the newspapers, and the persistent instruction to “read the news”. In **Boro Nanu**, it is the nimble hands shaping *pitha* and a sewing machine. In **Ekrām Sir**, it is the harmonium. In **Chachi**, it is a packet of Maggi noodles and the unending stack of ungraded copies.

This detail reinforces the



arrangements and a steady flow of visitors. Afzal Hossain and Hashem Khan attended and delivered speeches that framed the exhibition within a wider conversation about artistic practice, discipline, and sincerity.

At the heart of the exhibition, there are two distinct yet complementary artistic approaches. Noman Anwar's paintings depict places and human habitats with a bright palette and a controlled precision. Working in oil and acrylic, he builds scenes that feel both luminous and exact, with careful strokes that hold detail without losing atmosphere.

Facing Noman's wall is Izma's work, which turns decisively toward the human interior. Her paintings capture people not only as subjects but as presences, shaped by intimacy, memory, and the emotional truths that outlive a moment.

Her artistic statements, in particular, operate like short



exhibition's central idea, that art is not only an outcome but a passage, and that what passes between generations is not a single style but a shared commitment to making. In this room, one wall offers the world as it looks when rendered through light, place, and precision. The other offers the world as it is remembered, felt, and carried. The movement between them makes the title feel accurate, formal, and earned. Visitors can attend the exhibition today and tomorrow from 1 pm to 9 pm.



TAHSAN confirms separation with ROZA

Popular singer and actor Tahsan Khan surprised everyone early last year by announcing his marriage without any prior hint or rumours. He had embarked on this new chapter of his life with makeup artist Roza Ahmed.

However, reports suggest that the couple's relationship has not been going well for several months, and their marriage is now on the verge of breaking down. In fact, the couple has been living separately for the past few months.

Tahsan Khan confirmed this news to several media outlets, saying, “The news is true. We have been separated and living apart since the end of July. I will share

further details at the appropriate time.”

He also mentioned that he was not keen to discuss his personal life publicly at this stage. “I didn't want to speak about my personal life in public. But I saw some false news about our wedding anniversary, which is why I need to clarify that we are no longer together,” he added.

Tahsan Khan had married Roza Ahmed on January 4, 2025, after knowing her for just four months. Roza is a professional makeup artist with over a decade of experience in Bangladesh and the United States and runs her own makeup studio in New York.

SHONAR BANGLA CIRCUS returns with double album ‘Mohashoshan’



Popular Bangladeshi band Shonar Bangla Circus has released a new double album titled **Mohashoshan**. The conceptual project features a total of 17 tracks, spread across two discs.

The first disc, **Mohashoshan 1**, includes nine songs, while the second, **Mohashoshan 2**, contains eight songs. The album was released on Thursday evening (January 8) at 8 pm Bangladesh time through the band's official YouTube channel and is now available on Spotify and other major international digital streaming platforms.

According to a press release, Shonar Bangla Circus will launch a solo concert series titled **Mohashoshan Jatra** two months from now, where all the songs from the new album will be performed live for the first time.

The current lineup of the band includes Probar Ripon, Seth Panduranga Blumberg, Shakil Haque, and Saad Chowdhury.

Ahmed Hasan Sunny and Nusrat Maati host post-wedding reception



In May last year, university lecturer and filmmaker Nusrat Maati and musician-filmmaker Ahmed Hasan Sunny tied the knot in an intimate family ceremony. At the time, the couple had planned to host a post-wedding reception for friends and colleagues at a more convenient time. In line with that plan, they completed their post-marriage formalities on Friday night, in the presence of friends, well-wishers, and acquaintances beyond the immediate family.

Meanwhile, Sunny's film **Ekhane Rajnaitik Alaap Joruri** is set for release on January 16. Ahead of the release, the filmmaker has been busy with promotional activities, with the teaser, trailer and songs already unveiled. Completing the wedding formalities before the film's release has been a source of relief for him.

Before their marriage, Ahmed Hasan Sunny and Nusrat Maati shared a friendship of nearly three years, which eventually blossomed into a marital relationship.

Maati, who studied film in Europe, is currently working as a story and screenplay writer, alongside teaching film studies at a private university.



A sign reading “No Gas” is placed at the entrance to a filling station in the capital, where a supply crisis of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) due to some technical issues left pumps dry for most of the day. The photo was taken in Paribagh yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

City kitchens go cold amid gas crisis

FROM PAGE 1
a roadside restaurant as he had no gas supply at home.
He said food prices had risen overnight: on Friday, a plate of rice cost Tk 15, but it cost him Tk 20 yesterday.
Aminul Islam, a manager of the restaurant, blamed the rise in price for liquefied petroleum gas for the menu getting pricier.
Since the middle of last month, the standard 12-kg LPG cylinder has been selling for Tk 2,000 to Tk 2,500, up from Tk 1,350.
The number of people buying food from his restaurant surged. “We used to cook 20kg of rice daily, but today

we had to cook 30kg,” Aminul added.
Ferdousi Jahan Rose, a homemaker from Mohammadpur, said her family could not cook anything yesterday morning. “We reheated whatever food was left in the fridge with an electric oven. It wasn’t enough for the four people, but we somehow managed,” she said.
The crisis has even forced restaurants to abandon gas altogether.
One such eatery is Purobi Restaurant in Farmgate, which was forced to use firewood due to shortages in both piped gas and LPG supply, said Sultan Mahmud Hasan, a staffer at the restaurant.
The valve burst had been fixed

and the damaged pipeline under the Turag repaired, said Kazi Mohammad Saidul Hasan, general manager (operations) of Titas.
But water has entered the pipelines of households in several localities including Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Lalmatia and Aminbazar as a result of the punctured pipeline under the Turag.
“However, water that entered household gas lines remains a major challenge. We have flushed water out of some lines, but it has re-entered in some cases. At this stage, it is not possible to say exactly when the problem will be fully resolved,” Hasan told The Daily Star.

DB detains ‘shooter, 2 others’

FROM PAGE 1
Swechhasebak Dal’s Dhaka North City unit, was shot dead on January 7 when assailants opened fire on him and another man, Abu Sufian Bepari Masud, general secretary of Tejgaon Van Workers’ Union, in an alley near Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue.
Sufian sustained bullet injuries and is undergoing treatment at a hospital.
Within hours of the attack, CCTV footage of the incident spread on social media.
The footage shows two suspects sitting with a sack in an alley behind a restaurant. As soon as they spotted Musabbir, they pulled a pistol from the sack and shot him from behind. Musabbir collapsed to the ground,

but later got up and attempted to flee.
During the chaos, his mobile phone fell, which the shooters took before fleeing.
The footage also shows a bearded man standing beside the shooters.
The day after the murder, Musabbir’s wife filed a case with Tejgaon Police Station against four to five unidentified individuals. Following this, the DB launched an investigation.
Multiple DB teams carried out coordinated raids early Saturday in Gazipur and Manikganj, according to DB officials. Zinnat was arrested from Gazipur’s Boatbazar area, while Billal and Riaz were picked up from Manikganj.
Billal is the bearded man seen in the CCTV footage; he planned the

murder, which was later executed by shooters Zinnat and Rahim, with Riaz acting as an associate, according to the DB officials. The suspects had previously attempted to kill Musabbir but failed.
Rahim, who remains on the run, is Billal’s brother.
Several other individuals have been taken into custody for interrogation as part of the investigation.
Contacted, DB Chief Shafiqul Islam denied that any “shooter” had been arrested.
Around 60 people have been questioned so far in connection with the murder, but no arrests have been made, said Shafiqul, also an additional commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Dhaka pushes Washington to lower tariffs

FROM PAGE 14
Bangladeshi visa seekers if the overstay by the tourists declines substantially in the future.
Hooker made the suggestion during a meeting with Rahman on Friday, according to a statement by the Bangladesh embassy in Washington DC yesterday.
The US has recently announced that Bangladeshi applicants for visit and business visas must submit bonds ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000.
Over the past year, the US has repatriated about 300 undocumented Bangladeshis and is seeking the return of more than 4,000 others with pending cases.
During the meeting, Rahman also briefed Hooker about the preparations and arrangements for the upcoming general elections and expressed

appreciation for the support of the US to the interim government during its tenure, including for the elections.
Hooker said the US continues its strong support for the democratic transition in Bangladesh and looks forward to free and fair elections in February.
On broader regional issues, Rahman conveyed Bangladesh’s interest in principle in joining the proposed international stabilisation force for Gaza.
In response, Hooker said that the US is willing to work together with Bangladesh on this important matter.
In November last year, the UN Security Council passed a US-sponsored resolution which backs US President Donald Trump’s 20-point plan for ending Israel’s war on Gaza. Among the clauses

was one that supported the creation and deployment of an international stabilisation force to provide security and oversight of the ceasefire agreement in Gaza.
In a separate meeting with Assistant Secretary of State Paul Kapur, Rahman discussed issues of mutual interest, including the forthcoming election in Bangladesh, US-Bangladesh bilateral relations, the Rohingya crisis, the US visa bond, trade and investment and other regional issues.
As a special invitee, Rahman attended the swearing-in ceremony of Brent Christensen, the newly appointed US Ambassador to Bangladesh, held in the State Department. Christensen is expected to join the US Embassy in Dhaka tomorrow.

Venezuela eyes talks

FROM PAGE 14
world’s largest proven oil reserves.
At a White House meeting on Friday, he pressed top oil executives to invest in Venezuela’s reserves, but was met with a cautious reception – with ExxonMobil chief executive Darren Woods dismissing the country as “uninvestable” without sweeping reforms.
Trump said foreign firms had enjoyed no meaningful protections under Maduro, “but now you have total security. It’s a whole different Venezuela”.
He also stressed that the companies would deal only with Washington, not Caracas, when exploiting Venezuela’s oil resources.
Trump earlier said that oil companies promised to invest \$100 billion in Venezuela, whose oil infrastructure is creaky after years of mismanagement and sanctions.
He had earlier announced a plan for the United States to sell between 30 million and 50 million barrels of Venezuelan crude, with the money to be used at his discretion.
He promised any funds sent to Caracas would be used to buy only US-made products.
In the meanwhile, Washington has maintained maritime pressure on oil tankers in the Caribbean, where it seized a fifth tanker carrying Venezuelan crude – oil that would be sold, Trump said.

State-owned oil company PDVSA confirmed in a statement that one vessel was returning to Venezuelan waters, describing it as the “first successful joint operation” with Washington.
Anxious relatives waited outside Venezuelan jails for a glimpse of their loved ones as the authorities began releasing political prisoners – a move Washington claimed credit for.
“When I heard the news, I broke down,” said Dilisia Caro, 50, waiting for the release of her husband Noel Flores, who was jailed for criticising Maduro.
Venezuela began releasing prisoners on Thursday in the first such gesture since US forces removed and detained Maduro in the deadly January 3 raid.
Some relatives still gathered outside the prison had waited more than 36 hours to see their family members.
“We’ve been living with this uncertainty for several days now... We are worried, we are very distressed, filled with anxiety,” said one woman, awaiting the release of her brother.
In Nicaragua, meanwhile, authorities have arrested at least 60 people for reportedly expressing support for Maduro’s capture, according to a local human rights group.
Trump told Fox News he would meet next week with Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, whom he earlier brushed

aside as lacking the “respect” to lead Venezuela.
Exiled Venezuelan opposition figurehead Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia said that any democratic transition in the country must recognise his claim to victory in 2024 presidential elections.
Maduro was proclaimed the winner of the vote, but his re-election was widely seen as fraudulent.
Gonzalez was hoping Friday for the release of his son-in-law, who was detained a year ago in Caracas.
Maduro was seized in a US special forces raid accompanied by airstrikes, operations that left 100 people dead, according to Caracas.
US forces took Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores to New York to face trial on drug-trafficking and other charges.
Rodriguez insisted Thursday her country was “not subordinate or subjugated” despite her pledge to cooperate with Trump.
Angry protesters rallied in the streets of Caracas on Friday demanding Maduro’s release in the latest of a daily series of demonstrations.
“We don’t have to give one little drop of oil to Trump after all that he has done to us,” said one protester, Josefina Castro, 70, a member of a civil activists’ group.
“Our Venezuelan brothers died (in the attack), and that hurts.”

3 from Ctg family

FROM PAGE 14
Sundarpur Union of Fatikchhari upazila.
On Friday, the family members went to Salalah to visit a shrine. While returning, the car carrying five people hit a camel and overturned on the road, leaving three dead and two injured.
“We assured the family of providing maximum support if they want to bring the bodies back to Bangladesh,” said Sayed Mohammed Ibrahim, Fatikchhari upazila nirbahi officer.
Shafuil is a businessman in Oman and has been residing in the Middle Eastern country for a long time, his business partner Muhammad Parvez told local reporters.

EC clears 51

FROM PAGE 1
“Over the last week, I have gone through a very different kind of experience. People at home and abroad have sent their good wishes and prayers. When I spoke to people on the streets, many told me they were praying for me,” she told reporters after attending the hearings.
Meanwhile, at least 16 Jatiya Party candidates regained their candidacy yesterday through appeal. They include Abdul Hannan from Shariatpur-3, Mostafa Jamal from Narsingdi-1, and Salauddin Khoka from Narayanganj-4.
Hearings were held for five candidates of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, and all five regained their candidatures.
At the same time, one candidate each from Bangladesh Congress, Islami Oikya Jote, Jagpa, AB Party, Insaniyat Bangladesh, and Bangladesh Supreme Party; two each from Bangladesh Jasad and Basad; and three from Bangladesh Khilafat Majlis, as well as 15 independent candidates, also had their candidatures restored.

Pro-AL teacher

FROM PAGE 14
duty unethically,” said Sohanur Rahman, an executive member of Cucus.
After learning of Roman’s presence on campus, Cucus leaders informed the dean’s office. When Roman



learned of their move, he attempted to flee the venue. He was later handed over to the proctor’s office, according to Sohanur.
“There is no hiding the fact that he was a pro-AL faculty,” said CU Proctor Hossain Shaid Shohrwardhy.
No decision has been taken on Roman yet, said Shohorwardhy, also a professor in CU’s marketing department.

Japan PM mulling snap election in coming weeks: reports

AFP, Tokyo
Japan’s Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is considering calling a general election in the coming weeks to capitalise on strong public support for her government, media reports said Saturday.
Takaichi was appointed Japan’s first woman prime minister in October and her cabinet is enjoying an approval rating of around 70 percent.
But her ruling bloc only has a slim majority in the powerful lower house of parliament, hindering its ability to push through her ambitious policy agenda.

11 parties ‘close to reaching seat-sharing deal’

FROM PAGE 14
Khelafat Andolan, Amar Bangladesh Party (AB Party), Bangladesh Nezame-Islam Party, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (Jagpa) and Bangladesh Development Party (BDP).
The alliance initially comprised eight parties, with the NCP, LDP and AB Party joining later.
Ahsanul Mahbub Zubayer, assistant secretary general of Jamaat and a member of its election management committee, told The Daily Star, “We have more or less reached a conclusion. The announcement will be made jointly.”
Ashrafal Alam, joint secretary general of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, said once candidates are finalised for specific constituencies, other aspirants would be asked to withdraw.
Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish Secretary General Maulana Jalaluddin Ahmed said, “First we sit with Jamaat, and then Islami Andolan to resolve the issues with them. After that, we may have to sit with the NCP. That’s how it’s going.”
“In some seats, Jamaat has stepped aside but Islami Andolan has

US judge to block Trump move to end thousands of LatAm migrants’ legal status

REUTERS, Boston

A federal judge said on Friday she will block US President Donald Trump’s administration from cutting short temporary legal status for 10,000 to 12,000 migrants from Cuba, Haiti, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras that allowed them to reunite with family members in the United States.
US District Judge Indira Talwani said during a hearing in Boston she will issue by Monday a temporary restraining order sought by immigrant rights advocates who challenged the US Department of Homeland Security’s decision last month to terminate all family reunification parole programs for citizens from the seven nations.
The migrants are among 15,000 who entered the United States through the family reunification programs. They would have been forced as of Wednesday to return to the countries they came from or face deportation as a result of the department’s action.
Talwani, who was appointed by Democratic former President Barack Obama, expressed “frustration” with Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem’s decision to strip them of

lawful status, saying the department had not established it had given them the legally required notice it was doing so.
“I have a group of people here who are trying to follow the law, and I’m saying to you that we, America, also need to follow the law,” Talwani told a lawyer with the U.S. Department of Justice.
Justin Cox, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, called the agency’s move “outrageous,” saying 30% of the affected migrants were children, many of whom would be yanked out of schools.
Justice Department attorney Katie Rose Talley countered that Noem had broad discretion to terminate the migrants’ grants of parole. “There’s nothing unlawful about that,” she said.
CASE CONCERNED BIDEN-ERA PROGRAMS
The move, part of Trump’s aggressive immigration agenda, followed actions to cancel hundreds of thousands of humanitarian parole grants that allowed foreign nationals to temporarily live and work in the United States.
The Homeland Security Department announced on December 12 it was ending family reunification parole programs that Democratic President Joe Biden’s administration created or modernized in 2022 and 2023, effective January 14.

Free speech key

FROM PAGE 2
Chowdhury said the media had become largely free after August 5, 2024, when the Awami League regime was ousted.
“But it is still very restricted. I say ‘restricted’ because we cannot be as courageous as we want to be due to mob violence.”
He added that it is deeply disturbing when newspaper offices are set on fire.
Observing that Tarique faces stiff challenges ahead, Matiur said, “If attempts are made to face these challenges only from within one party, past mistakes will be repeated. We may again reach a situation from where it will be very difficult to return.”
Amar Desh Editor Mahmudur Rahman said that late journalist Ruhul Amin Gazi, a cancer patient, was pushed towards death without medical treatment after being kept in jail in a fabricated case. The mainstream media remained silent at the time.

Bangladesh, the media must be treated as a friend. “The media is not an enemy. The media tries to speak the truth.”
Daily Inqilab Editor AMM Bahauddin said that journalism over the past 18 years had been extremely difficult, adding that his newspaper was also shut down at one point.
Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said, “We want democracy, we want independent journalism, and we want good governance.”
He added that political parties do not speak much about the issue of climate change. “Bangladesh is one of the frontline countries, and we are already seeing the impact of climate change in the coastal areas. My request is that climate change be given priority.”
“We are one of the richest countries in the world when it comes to water resources, but we are polluting all our rivers.... It is quite incredible how we are moving towards river pollution and doing nothing about it. Another issue is our groundwater [decline]. We have to address this.”

This was the first time Tarique Rahman met with journalists and editors since his return to Dhaka on December 25 following a 17-year exile.
At the event, BNP Media Cell Convener Moudud Hossain Alamgir Pavel said the party’s 31-point agenda, including 12 key pledges for journalists, would be implemented if the BNP is voted to power.
According to the party, a “Media Commission” will be set up comprising a former Supreme Court judge, media professionals, and experienced and credible figures, to ensure complete freedom of the press and comprehensive reforms in the media sector.
Among the two dozen editors and journalists present at the programme, Kaler Kantho Editor Hasan Hafiz, bdnews24.com Editor-in-Chief Toufique Imrose Khalidi, Daily Naya Diganta Editor Salahuddin Muhammad Babar, Ekushey Television CEO Abdus Salam, and Dhaka Stream Editor Iftekhar Mahmud, also spoke.

Referring to journalist Kanak Sarwar, he said that for broadcasting a speech of Tarique Rahman, Kanak had to remain in jail for nearly a year. “Kanak’s sister was also kept in jail for months in a false drug case, yet the media’s conscience did not awaken.”
Jugantor Editor Abdul Hye Sikder said, “The interim government did not work for the rehabilitation of unemployed journalists. How will freedom of expression come? When I do not eat and my family does not eat, you must stand by us.”
He said that in tomorrow’s

not. In others, Islami Andolan agrees but the NCP does not. For one or two seats, we sometimes have to hold three or four meetings. That’s why it’s taking time,” he added, noting that his party met Jamaat as recently as last Thursday.

The move triggered the sharpest confrontation between Jamaat and Islami Andolan. An analysis shows candidates from the two parties are in direct contest in at least 240 constituencies, including several where senior leaders from both sides are running.
Sources involved in the talks say Islami Andolan has recently shown greater flexibility. Over the past few days, the two sides have reached tentative understandings in around 40 constituencies, though Islami Andolan continues to press for additional seats.
Jamaat may concede a few more seats after another round of assessments based on popularity and candidate merit.
According to Jamaat sources, the NCP is likely to be allotted around 30 seats, while LDP and Khelafat Majlish may receive seven seats each. AB Party has already been given two seats, which could rise to three, while BDP is expected to get two seats. Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish may receive up to 15 seats.
Jagpa spokesperson Rashed Pradhan also voiced optimism, saying his party is likely to be allocated at least two seats.

Can AI predict suicide?

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are increasingly being used in healthcare, raising hopes that technology could help identify people at risk of suicide and self-harm earlier than ever before. However, a new study suggests that machine learning tools are not reliable enough to predict suicidal behaviour in a way that would be useful for everyday healthcare. While there has been growing hope that artificial intelligence could help doctors identify people at high risk and intervene earlier, the research indicates that this promise has not yet been fulfilled.

For decades, clinicians have used various risk assessment tools to try to predict suicide or self-harm, but these have generally struggled to do so accurately. Machine learning was expected to improve this by analysing large amounts of health information and spotting hidden patterns. However, the latest findings show that these newer approaches perform no better than traditional methods.

In simple terms, the algorithms are much better at identifying people who are unlikely to harm themselves than those who actually will. Many



individuals who later went on to self-harm or die by suicide were incorrectly labelled as “low risk”. At the same time, a large number of people flagged as “high risk” never went on to harm themselves, meaning the tools also generate many false alarms.

The researchers conclude that relying on these predictions could be misleading and potentially harmful if they are used to decide who receives care or support. Current clinical guidelines already advise against using risk prediction alone to guide treatment, and this study reinforces that advice.

SOURCE: PLOS MEDICINE



DR MEASIN ALI

As winter approaches, many people experience an increase in joint pain and stiffness. The condition is particularly noticeable in the knees, lower back, neck, shoulders, and small joints of the hands and feet. Individuals suffering from osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, or other rheumatic disorders; those with previous joint injuries; and older adults are especially prone to worsening symptoms during the colder months. Seasonal environmental changes and lifestyle factors are key contributors to this problem.

During winter, lower temperatures cause blood vessels to constrict, reducing blood flow to the joints and surrounding muscles. This reduced circulation often leads to increased pain, stiffness, and discomfort. Cold weather also affects the synovial fluid inside the joints, making it thicker and less effective in facilitating smooth movement. Furthermore, reduced physical activity during winter results in joint stiffness and muscle weakness. Changes in

humidity and atmospheric pressure may also aggravate joint pain in susceptible individuals.

Effective management of winter-related joint pain requires proper care and timely treatment. Keeping the body and affected joints warm is essential. Wearing warm clothing, using knee or lumbar supports, and avoiding exposure to cold air can significantly reduce discomfort. Heat therapy applied to painful joints helps improve blood circulation and relieves stiffness.

Physiotherapy is one of the most effective treatment approaches for managing joint pain in winter. Modalities such as ultrasound therapy, shortwave diathermy, interferential therapy (IFT), TENS, and joint specific therapeutic exercises help reduce pain, improve mobility, and restore joint function. Regular stretching and light strengthening exercises enhance muscle support around the joints and prevent further deterioration.

Medications, including pain relievers and anti-inflammatory drugs, should only be taken under medical supervision. In

some cases, supplements such as calcium and vitamin D may be recommended. Self-medication for prolonged periods should be avoided, specialised treatments or joint injections may be necessary for severe conditions.

A balanced diet also plays a crucial role in maintaining joint health. Foods rich in calcium, vitamin D, protein, and omega-3 fatty acids—such as milk, eggs, small fish, vegetables, fruits, and nuts—are beneficial. Adequate hydration helps maintain joint lubrication, while weight control reduces excessive pressure on weight-bearing joints.

In summary, increased joint pain during winter is a common but manageable condition. With proper medical care, regular physiotherapy, a healthy lifestyle, and adherence to professional advice, individuals can maintain joint health and mobility throughout the winter season.

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Health records could help spot diabetes early

Diabetes is often thought of as an individual condition, but growing evidence suggests it can affect entire households. Lifestyle habits, shared environments and genetics mean that when one person is at risk, others living under the same roof may be too. New research presented at the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD) Annual Meeting in Vienna showed that analysing routine health records at a household level could help identify people at risk of diabetes much earlier than current approaches.

The study focused on adults with prediabetes and examined the health profiles of people living with them, including other adults and children. It found that diabetes risk frequently clusters within households, with many family members showing warning signs such as excess weight or abnormal blood sugar levels. Some adults living with someone who had prediabetes were already showing



signs of type 2 diabetes, while many children had risk factors that could place them in danger later in life.

This approach could help health systems move from treating individuals to supporting whole families. Identifying risk early creates opportunities for shared lifestyle changes, earlier testing and prevention programmes before diabetes develops. It may also help uncover undiagnosed cases, particularly in people who feel well and would not otherwise seek testing.

Overall, the findings highlight a simple but powerful idea: preventing diabetes may be more effective when families are supported together, rather than one person at a time.

7,000 steps a day could be the sweet spot for better health!

Staying physically active is widely known to be good for health, but how much activity is really enough? For years, the popular target of 10,000 steps a day has dominated fitness advice, despite limited scientific backing. Now, a major new study published in The Lancet Public Health suggests that a lower and more achievable goal — around 7,000 steps a day — may be enough to significantly reduce the risk of a wide range of serious health problems.

The study brings together evidence from dozens of previous studies involving more than 160,000 adults, making it one of the most comprehensive reviews of step-based physical activity to date. The findings show that people who walk around 7,000 steps per day have a much lower risk of early death compared with those who take very few steps. Regular walking at this level is also linked to lower risks of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, depression, dementia and even falls.

Importantly, the benefits are not limited to people who are already active. Even increasing daily movement from very low levels to moderate levels appears to make a meaningful difference. People

who walked around 4,000 steps a day were healthier than those taking roughly 2,000 steps, showing that small increases in activity can still deliver health gains.

For certain conditions, particularly heart disease, benefits continued to increase beyond 7,000 steps. However, for most outcomes, the improvements tended to level off, suggesting that more steps are not always necessary to gain protection.

One of the most significant aspects of this research is its practicality. Many people find the 10,000-step target intimidating or unrealistic, especially older adults, people with long-term conditions or those who are currently inactive. A 7,000-step goal may feel far more achievable and could encourage more people to move regularly rather than give up altogether.

The study also broadens the conversation about physical activity. Rather than focusing solely on heart health or weight, it highlights links between walking and brain health, mental wellbeing and independence later in life. The association with reduced risk of dementia and depression, while still based on limited evidence, is particularly encouraging given the growing public health burden of these conditions.

Daily step counts are simple to track using smartphones, watches or pedometers, making them an accessible way for people to monitor their activity. Unlike structured exercise plans, walking can easily be built into daily routines — such as commuting, shopping or spending time outdoors.

The findings could help shape future public health guidance by offering a clear, realistic target that still delivers meaningful health benefits. For individuals, the message is reassuring: you do not need to run marathons or hit extreme fitness goals to improve your health. Consistent, moderate movement can go a long way.

Aim to move more, sit less, and remember that every step counts — with 7,000 steps a day emerging as a realistic and beneficial goal for many people.



AI in colonoscopy: A helpful tool or a risk to doctors' skills?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming part of everyday medical care, with growing enthusiasm for its ability to support doctors in making faster and more accurate decisions. In colonoscopy, AI systems have been widely welcomed for helping clinicians identify precancerous growths that might otherwise be overlooked. However, emerging evidence suggests that routine dependence on this technology may have unintended consequences.

In a recent study, researchers compared colonoscopies performed by highly experienced specialists before and after AI tools were introduced into regular clinical practice. Although AI-assisted procedures continued to show strong detection results, a different pattern emerged when clinicians worked without technological support. Several months after AI became routine, the same specialists were less successful at identifying precancerous growths on their own.

These findings raise important concerns about whether long-term AI use could reduce clinicians' vigilance or decision-making skills when technology is unavailable. Notably, this is the first study to suggest that artificial intelligence may negatively affect healthcare professionals' ability to perform a task that has direct and meaningful consequences for patient outcomes.

Colonoscopy plays a crucial role in preventing bowel cancer by identifying and removing precancerous lesions early. If reliance on AI weakens clinicians' core skills, this could have implications for patient safety, particularly in settings where AI tools are unavailable or malfunction. The study highlights the importance of balancing innovation with ongoing training as AI becomes more embedded in healthcare.

SOURCE: THE LANCET GASTROENTEROLOGY & HEPATOLOGY

Meeting clean air targets could curb the diabetes burden in Bangladesh

JUWEL RANA

Air pollution may play a significant role in Bangladesh's rapidly growing diabetes burden, according to a new nationally representative study that finds that air pollution increases diabetes risk among adults.

In our study of 13,965 adults, published in the prestigious international journal Science of the Total Environment, we found that Bangladesh's annual average PM_{2.5} concentration, approximately 70 micrograms per cubic metre, is among the highest globally and far exceeds both national standards and World Health Organisation (WHO) air quality guidelines. Currently, about 16 percent of Bangladeshi adults live with diabetes, highlighting the scale of the public health challenge we are facing.

We discovered that each 10 microgram per cubic metre increase in long-term PM_{2.5} exposure was associated with a 10 percent higher risk of diabetes. We also found that urban residents, women, older adults, and individuals with obesity or hypertension were particularly vulnerable to the air pollution-related risk of diabetes.



Our analysis further estimates that between 4.6 and 7.5 percent of diabetes cases nationwide could be prevented if Bangladesh were able to meet its national clean air target of 15 µg/m³ per year or the WHO interim air quality guideline of 35 µg/m³. We observed that the largest potential health gains would be seen among urban residents, women, older adults, and those with obesity or hypertension.

Districts with heavy industrial activity and dense populations, such as Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur, and Munshiganj, are likely to benefit most from improved air quality, with substantial potential reductions in the diabetes burden. While diabetes is often associated with lifestyle factors, the study highlights air pollution as an underrecognised risk factor. Long-term PM_{2.5} exposure may increase the risk of diabetes through inflammation, oxidative stress, and impaired insulin function, underscoring air pollution control as a critical public health intervention.

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Silent threats before birth: Air pollution and climate risks for infants

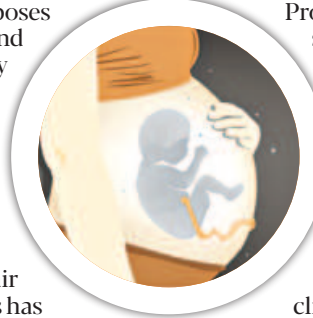
Prenatal exposure to ambient air pollution and climatic factors, such as temperature and rainfall, is associated with adverse birth outcomes in India, according to a new study published in PLOS Global Public Health. Ambient fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), tiny particles less than 2.5 microns in diameter produced mainly by burning fossil fuels and biomass, poses a significant health risk and has been linked to a variety of paediatric and adult illnesses. India is among the most polluted countries globally, with PM_{2.5} levels far exceeding both national and World Health Organisation standards.

While most research on air pollution and birth outcomes has focused on high-income countries, this study examined the impact of PM_{2.5} at the national level in India, assessing low birth weight and preterm birth. Using satellite data and large-scale surveys, the researchers found that higher in utero exposure to PM_{2.5} was associated with

increased risks of both outcomes. Climatic factors, including high temperatures and irregular rainfall, were also linked to adverse birth outcomes. Northern districts of India were identified as particularly vulnerable.

The study highlights the need for targeted public health interventions. Strengthening the National Clean Air Program with stricter emission standards and improved air quality monitoring is recommended, alongside climate adaptation measures such as heat action plans and better water management. Awareness campaigns for pregnant women about the risks of air pollution and climate extremes could also help reduce health risks.

The findings underscore the importance of integrating air quality management and climate resilience into maternal and child health strategies to protect vulnerable populations and improve birth outcomes across India.



No top players in Bangladesh now: Moeen Ali

Despite having stepped away from international cricket in 2024, Moeen Ali remains a familiar presence in franchise leagues worldwide. A long-time observer of Bangladesh cricket – tracing back to his age-level playing days, stints in the country’s domestic circuit, and personal ties to Sylhet – the 38-year-old is back in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), representing Sylhet Titans this edition. In a conversation with The Daily Star’s Samsul Arefin Khan, the former England all-rounder spoke about Bangladesh cricket’s development gaps, the BPL’s reputation issues, the politics shaping the modern game, and more. The excerpts follow:

The Daily Star (DS): How do you assess Bangladesh cricket’s evolution?
Moeen Ali (MA): Initially, I saw Bangladesh evolving nicely with players like Tamim [Iqbal] and Shakib [Al Hasan], but I also feel it has not improved enough recently. While there are many good players now, there are no top players. And that’s where Bangladesh cricket is struggling... In the BPL, some of the shot selection the players do is so silly; the

problem is that people have become used to seeing the same mistakes constantly. I’ve been here for a few seasons, and I still see them making the same mistakes. It feels like the players here are very slow at learning.

DS: Why hasn’t Bangladesh produced match-winners of late?
MA: You guys talk about the top five, but I actually believe it’s two – Tamim and Shakib – who were outstanding... The difference is that those top players singlehandedly won games for many years on their own.

DS: Do you think Bangladesh were unlucky with Tamim and Shakib’s recent absences?
MA: I think Tamim sticks to what he believes is right and does what he feels is best for him. I admire that he says when he feels something is wrong, regardless of politics. Generally, the mindset in Bangladesh regarding journalism, punditry, coaching, and facilities needs to improve.

DS: Apart from Rishad [Hossain] and Mustafizur [Rahman], who else has global potential?
MA: Litton Das, Najmul Hossain Shanto, and Tawhid Hridoy are good players with ability. Hridoy is one of the most



talented players in Bangladesh, but I haven’t seen his improvement continue since I played with him a few years ago. Players must challenge themselves in practice by working on things they aren’t good at, rather than just practising their strengths.

DS: Why hasn’t the BPL reached the

level of newer franchise leagues?
MA: It is a matter of reputation regarding payments... Players talk to each other; if someone doesn’t get paid, they won’t return and will tell others not to risk coming. New franchises have to deal with the negative reputation that existed before them.

DS: Why would you encourage players to come to the BPL?
MA: Because it is good for the game. I would tell young players it is very good for their development because the conditions are difficult.

DS: What’s your view on the BCB-ICC situation after Mustafizur’s IPL snub?
MA: I’m sad for Mustafizur. It is a shame that politics is mixed with sport, and often politicians are the ones running the cricket. Even if you see Gautam Gambhir, he becomes a politician after retiring and then becomes coach of India.

DS: Is the “Big Three” becoming a “Big One” with India dominating?
MA: I don’t blame India – one of my favourite places. But they are only doing what Australia and England did before them: making sure they are okay. Other boards often remain silent because their own teams and finances are fine, so no one stands up for what is actually right.

BFL 2nd phase from Feb 6 to Apr 29

SPORTS REPORTER

As per a detailed fixtures list released by the Bangladesh Football Federation on Saturday, the second phase of the Bangladesh Football League will resume on February 6 and conclude on April 29.

The first phase of the league ended on January 3, immediately followed by the mid-term transfer window. With the window set to close on January 31, domestic football will return on February 3 with two Federation Cup fixtures – Brothers Union facing PWD at the Bashundhara Kings Arena in Dhaka, and Rahmatganj taking on Abahani at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla.

The Federation Cup group-stage matches will continue until March 10, all to be held at the same two venues, before an eliminator and a qualifier scheduled for March 17. The second qualifier will be played on April 7, while the final is set for April 17.

Meanwhile, the league’s resumption on February 6 will feature two matches on the opening day, followed by three more fixtures the next day. The competition will then pause for a 12-day break due to the national elections slated for February 12. Another major break will follow from March 15 to April 9 for Eid-ul-Fitr.

After the Eid recess, the league will run smoothly into its final stretch, culminating in the 18th and last round on April 28, when five matches are scheduled to be played on the final matchday.

Biggest ever FA Cup shock



PHOTO: AFP

Crystal Palace’s FA Cup defence ended in humiliation as sixth-tier Macclesfield beat the holders 2–1, overturning a record 117-place gap -- the biggest in the competition’s history. Captain Paul Dawson headed the underdogs ahead just before half-time, before Isaac Buckley-Ricketts bundled in a second after the break. Jeremy Pino pulled one back for Palace with a free-kick in the 90th minute, but it could not save them from going down in history for the wrong reasons. The victory was all the more emotional for a club reformed in 2020 after unpaid debts and still grieving the death of 21-year-old forward Euan McLeod. Stunned, Palace manager Oliver Glasner admitted: “I have no explanation for what I have seen today.”



PHOTO: REAL MADRID

The first Clasico of the year, a chance to lift the season’s first trophy, and a battle of ego and revenge -- the Spanish Super Cup final between Real Madrid and Barcelona at the King Abdullah Sport City Stadium in Jeddah on Sunday already has plenty at stake, alongside the usual hype that accompanies this historic rivalry.

- » This will be the fourth consecutive time that Real Madrid and Barcelona face off in the final of the competition.
- » The two sides have met 18 times in the Spanish Super Cup, with Real winning 10 matches, Barca claiming six victories, and two ending in draws.
- » After a tumultuous period near the end of 2025 that left Real coach Xabi Alonso on the brink of the sack, Los Blancos have turned things around with five consecutive victories, the latest a 2-1 win over city rivals Atletico Madrid in the semifinals.
- » A win in the final would hand Xabi Alonso his first trophy as Real coach and provide him some breathing room.
- » Xabi’s Real won the first Clasico of the season with a 2-1 LaLiga victory last year. But before his arrival, the side were hammered 5-2 at the same stage last season, also at the same venue in Jeddah.
- » Real will be boosted by the return of Kylian Mbappe, who missed the semifinal due to a knee sprain suffered in late December, although Xabi said he would be cautious about including the club’s top scorer, who has 29 goals in 24 matches across all competitions this season.
- » In each of the last three seasons, the Super Cup winners also went on to win LaLiga.
- » The final offers Barcelona added incentive, as they have the chance to retain the title for a second consecutive year -- something no side has managed in the past 15 years.
- » Should Barcelona lift the trophy, the Blaugrana would also end another notable trend, as it has been eight years since the reigning league champions went on to win the Super Cup the following season.

Batters’ dip in form deepens Tigers’ worries

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Sylhet

Bangladesh batters rarely enjoy prolonged purple patches. Even those who appear in good touch often lose form ahead of major tournaments – a concern long shared by fans and experts and recently voiced by the national team’s specialised batting coach Mohammad Ashraful during the T20I series against the West Indies last October.

That fear is now being reflected in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). After 20 of the scheduled 34 matches, most Bangladeshi batters have failed to make a meaningful impact, while bowlers have largely carried the show -- an alarming trend with the ICC T20 World Cup scheduled to begin on February 7 in India and Sri Lanka.

The uncertainty surrounding Bangladesh’s participation in the World Cup has only added to the unease. Several players have reportedly avoided the media in recent days, unwilling to face uncomfortable questions about their form, the Mustafizur Rahman issue, and the continuing row between the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the International Cricket Council

(ICC).

Yet the scorecards tell a clearer story. Other than Sylhet Titans opener Parvez Hossain Emon, who is second on the tournament’s run-getters’ list with 236 runs in eight innings, including two half-centuries, none of the other batters from Bangladesh’s World Cup squad feature in the top 10. Bangladesh captain Litton Das is next among the squad members with 129 runs from six matches for Rangpur Riders. Dhaka Capitals’ Shamim Hossain, one of the options for the Tigers’ fragile middle order, has scored 114 runs in five innings -- 81 of which came in a single knock against Sylhet that still ended in defeat.

Rangpur’s Tawhid Hridoy, who began with a fifty against Rajshahi Warriors in the second match, has struggled since, managing 106 runs in six games. Rajshahi opener Tanzid Tamim has 87 runs from six matches, failing to convert starts, while Saif Hassan has scored just 48 runs in five matches and was even rested by Dhaka after four games. Rangpur skipper Nurul Hasan has only 20 runs from four innings, and Dhaka all-rounder Saifuddin 41 from three -- figures well below expectations.

Rajshahi head coach Hannan Sakar



PHOTO: FACEBOOK

attempted to explain the slump.

“Form in T20 cricket depends a lot on batting position, team strategy, and environment,” Hannan told reporters in Sylhet on Saturday. “In franchise cricket, players have to fit into the team’s plan. Ideally, World Cup players want to play in their natural roles and carry confidence forward, but in the BPL that isn’t always possible.”

In contrast, Bangladesh’s bowlers have been impressive. Chattogram Royals pacer Shoriful Islam leads the wicket-takers’ list with 13 wickets from seven matches at an economy rate of 6.92. Rangpur’s Mustafizur Rahman has 12 wickets from six games at 6.52. Among the spinners, Rajshahi’s Nasum has nine wickets in eight matches, including a stunning 5-7 -- the best bowling figure by a spinner in BPL history -- while Chattogram’s Mahedi Hasan has seven wickets from as many games.

Rishad Hossain, the only World Cup-bound Bangladeshi currently playing in the Big Bash League, also claimed 11 wickets in eight matches and earned the ‘world-class’ tag from Hobart Hurricanes captain Nathan Ellis. However, Taskin Ahmed and Saifuddin remain concerns, with low wicket tallies and economy rates above eight.

Hannan repeated the familiar line that “one or two good innings can change everything” for batters. But with Bangladesh’s World Cup participation still uncertain, the batters’ form could at least have offered some reassurance -- and for now, that much-needed relief remains nowhere in sight.



Morocco forward Brahim Diaz celebrates in trademark fashion after scoring the opening goal in a 2-0 victory over Cameroon in the quarterfinals of the Africa Cup of Nations in Rabat on Friday night. The Real Madrid star is currently the top-scorer in the tournament with five goals, leading Ademola Lookman of Nigeria and Amad Diallo of Ivory Coast by two goals. Morocco have made it to the last four for the first time in 22 years.

PHOTO: AFP

