



“I spoke again of the absolute necessity of putting a stop to these unacceptable attacks on countries.”
Macron, after talks with Iranian president

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

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At least 18 killed as bus plunges into Padma

Vehicle pulled out of river at Daulatdia ferry terminal; 14 bodies found inside

SUZIT KUMAR DAS, from Rajbari

At least 18 bodies were recovered early today after a bus fell into the Padma from the pontoon of Daulatdia ferry terminal in Rajbari yesterday afternoon.

The deceased include three children and 11 women, said Dewan Sohel Rana, deputy assistant director of Rajbari Fire Service.

Rescuers recovered 14 bodies from the Souhardo Paribahan bus after BIWTA salvage vessel Hamza pulled it out from the

riverbed 80 feet below around midnight, more than six and a half hours after the tragedy. Two other bodies were found under water.

Two other women were found dead earlier. Rehana Begum, 60, and Marjina Begum, 55, were dead on arrival at Daulatdia Upazila Health Complex, the facility's Resident Medical Officer Md Shariful Islam said.

According to police and local sources, 11 passengers managed to swim to safety.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Screengrabs of footage widely circulated on social media show a bus falling into the Padma river from a pontoon of Daulatdia ferry terminal in Rajbari around 5:15pm yesterday. The Dhaka-bound bus of Souhardo Paribahan was from Kushtia's Kumarkhali upazila.

Independence Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nation observes the 56th Independence Day and National Day today in tribute to the martyrs and valiant sons who laid down their lives for the country's independence.

The armed struggle for independence began in the early hours of March 26 following the brutal crackdown on the unarmed Bangalees by the Pakistani occupation forces on the Black Night of March 25, 1971.

After nine months of war and a sea of blood, victory came on December 16.

A 31-gun salute at dawn will kick off the day. The national flag will be hoisted atop government, semi-government, autonomous and private buildings, and the national anthem will be performed.

In the morning, President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will lay wreaths at the National Mausoleum in Savar.

Later, the families of the Birshreshtha, war-wounded and other brave freedom fighters will lay wreaths, joined by people from all walks of life, including foreign diplomats, political leaders, and representatives of social, cultural and professional organisations.

At 7:30am, a parade and

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

Witnesses to GENOCIDE

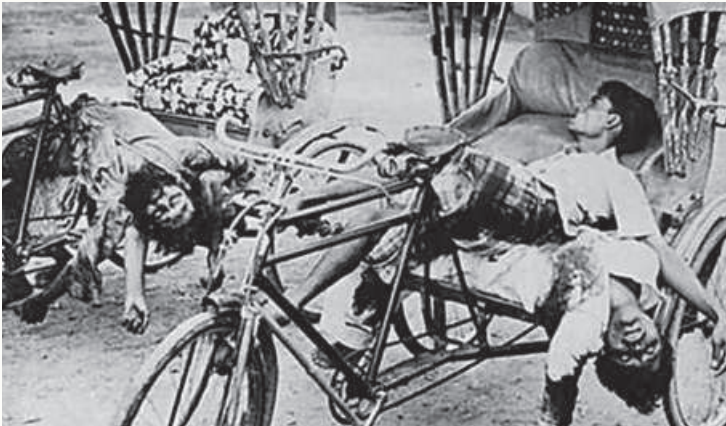
What American diplomats and doctors saw in Dhaka during and after Operation Searchlight

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

March 1971. The signs were ominous. There were uncomfortable developments, and people spoke of them in hushed undertones. Something was brewing and it did not bode well.

The political impasse appeared to have reached a breaking point by March 25. Dhaka seemed to hold its breath amid the suffocating tension.

There were a number of foreign diplomats, professionals, doctors, and aid workers who



witnessed what happened that evening and later at night. They spoke of the Pakistan Army's atrocities they had seen.

They saw how the army was unleashed on civilians. Others said they heard explosions, machine gun fire, and tank shells, and saw tracers streaking through the night sky.

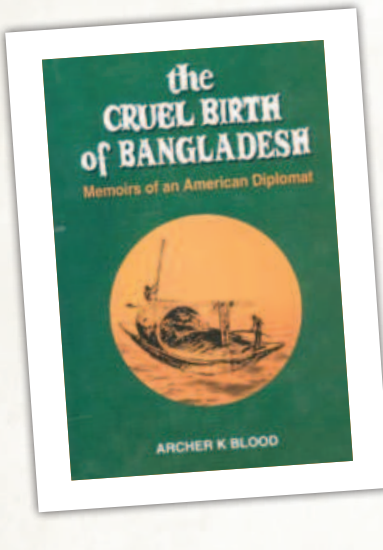
Their accounts, written in dispatches and letters, or recounted to friends, remain among the earliest eyewitness records of the crackdown that marked the beginning of Bangladesh's Liberation War.

Archer K Blood, then US consul general in Dhaka, captured the magnitude of that night in words that still resonate. "December 7, 1941 is remembered by Americans, in Franklin D Roosevelt's [then US president] memorable words, as a 'day that will live in infamy'. So too should the night of March 25, 1971 live on in the annals of the young nation of Bangladesh as a night of infamy."

DHAKA ON FIRE

Earlier that evening, Blood had hosted a dinner for 16, trying to maintain a sense of normalcy amid rising tension.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Fuel queues eating into earning hours

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Abdul Alim, 45, a rideshare driver for the last four years in Dhaka, did not go home to Jhenaidah for Eid this year.

He chose to stay, hoping to cash in on the holiday rush. In the days leading up to Eid, his plan seemed to be working: he was earning Tk 3,500 to Tk 4,000 a day by working long hours.

But that momentum did not last.

In the days after Eid, Alim found himself spending hours not on the road, but in fuel queues.

"I stood in line for an hour on Tuesday and got Tk 300 worth of fuel. That lasted four to five hours, then I was in the queue again."

Alim's ordeal mirrors that of many others.

At the Trust filling station, queues of cars stretched nearly a kilometre. Many had been waiting for hours.

Rajibul Hasan, a private company employee, said he left home with his bike around 9:00am and visited at least seven filling stations in areas including Shanir Akhra and Jatrabari, only to find them closed or out of fuel.

He eventually found one open at Tejgaon and stood in line for five to six hours.

"I told my office I was going to the pump. But if I end up spending the whole day here, when will I work?" he said.

A similar experience was shared by car

Motorists are spending 3-4 hours in queues

Filling stations have started rationing fuel

Diesel stocks at 1.7 lakh tonnes, octane at 9,800 tonnes



When this newspaper found Alim in a queue outside the Trust Filling Station near the Bijoy Sarani intersection around 4:00pm yesterday, he had already been waiting since 11:00am.

"If it takes five hours just to get fuel, when will we work?" he asked.

During Eid, when Alim works almost round the clock, his fuel needs rise to eight to nine litres a day.

"Before Eid, I somehow managed. But after Eid, I'm barely getting any."

driver Mahbubur Rahman Sheikh, who joined the queue around 9:30am, but at one point fuel ran out before his turn.

Supply resumed after a gap of around five hours, leaving him waiting until the afternoon.

"My family keeps calling, asking why it's taking so long. If I spend the whole day here, how will I do anything else?" he asked.

Trust was the only pump providing full-

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Iran rejects US ceasefire plan

Counters 15-point proposal with five conditions of its own; fighting continues amid reports of fresh US troop deployments to Middle East

Iran hits targets across Israel, Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain

Pakistan hands over US 15-point peace plan to Iran

Iran says Hormuz open to 'non-hostile' oil vessels

61% Americans oppose US ops in Iran

AGENCIES

Iran yesterday rejected a 15-point ceasefire proposal by the United States, setting out its own conditions for peace, according to Iranian state media.

"Iran will end the war when it decides to do so and when its own conditions are met," reported Press TV, quoting a "senior political-security official".

The official offered Iran's own five-point plan, which consisted of a halt to killings of its officials, the means to ensure no other war is waged against it, reparations for the war, the end of hostilities and Iran's "exercise of sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz".

Earlier in the day, Iran's military took a jab at the Trump administration's push for a deal to end the war, saying Washington is "negotiating with itself".

US President Donald Trump has sent a 15-point plan to Iran via Pakistan, which has offered to



Smoke rises from the area of the Kuwait International Airport after a reported drone strike hit a fuel depot yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

mediate a possible end to the war, a senior Iranian source, on condition of anonymity, told Reuters.

The plan – which has not been made public – reportedly includes Iran dismantling nuclear facilities in exchange for the lifting of

sanctions.

"Has the level of your inner struggle reached the stage of you negotiating with yourself?" Ebrahim Zolfagari, spokesperson for the unified command of Iran's armed forces, Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, told the

state media.

"People like us can never get along with people like you," Zolfagari said, adding that investments and pre-war energy prices would not return as long as

Washington does not accept that regional stability is guaranteed by Iranian armed forces.

Zolfagari's remarks came a day after Trump said Tehran wants to make a deal "so badly" to end the war.

Despite Trump's optimism that a deal with Tehran is in sight, reports suggest that the US was sending more troops to the Middle East for a possible ground intervention.

Fighting in the nearly four-week war raged on yesterday, with Iran targeting US assets across the Middle East with a fresh volley of missiles and US-Israeli strikes hitting key military targets in Iran, Lebanon and Iraq.

The conflict that began on

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



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“সাপ্লিমেন্ট আমদানি সম্পর্কিত গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি”

এতদ্বারা সাপ্লিমেন্ট সম্পর্কিত সকল আমদানিকারকদের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, ঔষধ ও কসমেটিকস আইন, ২০২৩ মোতাবেক ডায়েটারী সাপ্লিমেন্ট, হারবাল সাপ্লিমেন্ট, নিউট্রিশনাল সাপ্লিমেন্ট, মেডিকেল নিউট্রিশন বা থেরাপিউটিক নিউট্রিশন বা খাদ্য পথ্য বা সম্পূরক পথ্য-জাতীয় পদসমূহ নিবন্ধন/ পূর্বানুমোদন ব্যতীত উৎপাদন, আমদানি, রপ্তানি, বিক্রয়, বিতরণ, মজুদ বা প্রদর্শন করা দণ্ডনীয় অপরাধ।

এমতাবস্থায়, আমদানি পরবর্তী পণ্য খালাসসহ অন্যান্য জটিলতা নিরসনে ঔষধ প্রশাসন অধিদপ্তরের নিবন্ধন/ পূর্বানুমোদন ব্যতিরেকে ডায়েটারী সাপ্লিমেন্ট, হারবাল সাপ্লিমেন্ট, নিউট্রিশনাল সাপ্লিমেন্ট, মেডিকেল নিউট্রিশন বা থেরাপিউটিক নিউট্রিশন বা খাদ্য পথ্য বা সম্পূরক পথ্য-জাতীয় পদসমূহ আমদানির নিমিত্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি পত্রিকায় প্রকাশের তারিখ হতে Letter of Credit (LC)/ Telegraphic Transfer (TT) না খোলার জন্য আমদানিকারকগনসহ সংশ্লিষ্ট সকল কর্তৃপক্ষকে বিশেষভাবে অনুরোধ করা হলো। উল্লেখ্য যে উক্ত তারিখের পর হতে ঔষধ প্রশাসন অধিদপ্তরের নিবন্ধন/ পূর্বানুমোদন ব্যতীত LC/ TT খোলা হলে কোন প্রকার ছাড়পত্র প্রদান করা হবে না।

স্বাক্ষরিত/-
মহাপরিচালক
ঔষধ প্রশাসন অধিদপ্তর

GD-647

Two Russian navy ships in Ctg on 4-day goodwill visit

DIPLMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Two Russian navy ships are on a four-day goodwill visit to Bangladesh aimed at strengthening bilateral relations and creating new avenues for training and exchange of experience, said a statement by the Russian embassy in Dhaka yesterday.

The two corvettes, Sovershenny and Rezky of Russia's Pacific Fleet, arrived at Chittagong port on Tuesday, where Russian naval personnel were received by Bangladesh Navy representatives and Russian embassy staff.

Over the next few days, the crews of the Russian ships will participate in a number of events together with the Bangladesh Navy servicemen.

The agenda also includes meetings with the Commander of Chattogram Naval Area, senior military officials, and members of the Chittagong Port Authority.

As part of the tour, visiting officials and sailors will also pay respects at the tomb of Soviet sailor Yuri Redkin at the Bangladesh Naval Academy

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



Theatre group Prachyanat School of Acting and Design yesterday brought out its “Lalajatra” procession after a street show at Soparjito Swadhinota Chhattr at TSC, Dhaka University, and marched to Smriti Chirantan Chhattr to commemorate the victims of the genocide carried out by the Pakistan army on unarmed Bangalees on the night of March 25, 1971.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Meta, YouTube found liable in social media addiction case

REUTERS

Alphabet's Google and Meta were found liable on Wednesday for designing platforms that are dangerous for teens, in a landmark verdict that could force tech firms to rethink how they defend themselves against safety claims.

The verdict could mark a turning point in the global backlash against their platforms' perceived mental health harms to kids and teens, more than two decades after the emergence of social media.

Punitive damages for the companies will be decided next. The jury may consider whether Google or Meta's products caused the plaintiff physical harm or whether the companies disregarded the health of other users, Judge Carolyn Kuhl said in court.

The case involves a 20-year-old woman, a minor when the case began who is known in court by her first name Kaley. She said she became addicted to Google's YouTube and Meta's Instagram at a young age because of their attention-grabbing design. The jury found Google and Meta were negligent in the design of both apps and failed to warn about their dangers.

“Today's verdict is a referendum — from a jury, to an entire industry — that accountability has arrived,” the plaintiff's lead counsel said in a statement.

Shares of Meta were up nearly 1% and Alphabet shares were slightly lower, little changed after the verdict.

Fuel queues eating into earning hours

FROM PAGE 1

tank refuelling out of the 12 filling stations this newspaper visited in the capital yesterday.

Maj Abul Ala Muhammad Tauhid (ret'd), assistant director of Trust Energy, reported a reduced supply compared to normal allocation. “Whatever amount we receive, we immediately distribute it among customers.”

He said the pump was able to sell fuel until around 9:30am yesterday, after which it remained closed for some time before resuming around 2:30pm.

“We may have to keep the station closed at night, as the current supply is not sufficient to operate 24 hours.”

In Mirpur, most pumps had their gates shut or supply halved. At five filling stations visited in the area, petrol and octane were unavailable.

A staff member at a pump on Begum Rokeya Sarani said their daily supply had been cut in half — from around 9,000 litres to 4,500 litres — while demand remained unchanged.

“When fuel arrives, we sell it. Once it runs out, we shut down,” he said.

At two filling stations in Paribag, long queues of motorcycles and cars were seen in the evening.

Mahfuzur Rahman was one of those waiting in line despite heavy rainfall. He had come from Mirpur to Meghna Model Service Centre.

He had visited four pumps in Tejgaon with no luck before joining the queue.

Just minutes after speaking with him, the Meghna pump also shut down for the day around 7:00pm.

Customers then rushed to a nearby station, Purbachal Traders, which had remained closed throughout the day but resumed operations immediately after the Meghna station shut down.

Both the pumps were selling fuel up to five litres per motorcycle.

Ashrafuzzaman Dulal, counter chief at the station, told The Daily Star that it had been out of operation since Monday midnight.

“We are rationing so that more customers can be served,” he said.

The country's fuel supply chain is under pressure as a sharp post-Eid surge in demand coincides with import uncertainties linked to global geopolitical tensions.

As of yesterday, the country's diesel stocks stand at around 1.7 lakh tonnes, sufficient for roughly 13 days, while octane supplies of 9,800 tonnes may last about eight days, and petrol reserves are estimated at 15,000 tonnes, enough for around 10 days.

Despite assurances from authorities that the stock is adequate, the reality at filling stations around the country tells a different story.

Faruk Miah was travelling from Mymensingh's Nandail to Dhaka with his wife and two children on a motorbike yesterday noon.

kilometres and got fuel worth Tk 200 after waiting around one hour.”

In Chattogram, motorbikes and cars were seen moving from one pump to another in search of fuel.

“I had to lobby with an influential person to get fuel,” said motorcyclist Md Reza while waiting at Kalam & Brothers Filling Station next to the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in North Salimpur, under Sitakunda upazila.

Rice trader Shahidar Rahman, 56, from the Chourasta area of Lalmonirhat's Patgram, said, “It's not possible for me to wait in a long queue. So, I've left my motorcycle at home, and I'm now using a battery-run autorickshaw.”

Ranjan Krishna Pandit, a motorbike rider from Tangail's Kalihati, said,



Motorists flock to Maria Filling Station on Khulna Bypass Road for fuel amid a supply crunch yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

“When I started, I bought Tk 200 worth of fuel and hoped to refill the tank on the way. But I've been finding all the pumps shut,” he said in the afternoon while waiting for fuel at Molla Filling Station on the Dhaka-Kishoreganj highway in Gazipur's Kapasia.

Yunus Sheikh, a motorcyclist in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila, said, “First I visited two pumps with no luck. Later, I travelled around 11

“Most of the pumps are running out of fuel. If someone is lucky, they can get only Tk 200 worth of fuel after waiting in a very long queue.”

In Khulna, many filling stations had little or no fuel. Some put up “No Fuel Available” signs, while others restricted entry.

[Our correspondents from Gazipur, Chattogram, Bagerhat, Lalmonirhat, Tangail and Khulna contributed to this report.]

At least 18 killed as bus plunges into Padma

FROM PAGE 1

Goalanda Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Maruf Hasan said three survivors, including a doctor, received treatment at the facility.

It was unclear until the filing of the report at 2:00am today if any other victim remained missing. Rescue operations were ongoing.

Earlier, quoting a passenger, the fire service said they learned that the bus, from Kushtia's Kumarkhali upazila, was carrying at least 40 passengers, but they could not confirm how many were inside during the accident.

Accounts of how the bus fell into the river were also sketchy, with some eyewitnesses claiming that it started moving after a wheel chock dislodged.

A widely circulated video clip shows the bus rolled over the guard rails of Pontoon 3 and falling into the river.

Survivor Abdul Aziz said the bus was stationary but started rolling all on a sudden. It fell into the river within seconds.

Md Monir Hossain, transport supervisor at the ferry terminal, said the bus arrived at the pontoon shortly after 5:00pm.

At that time, a ferry carrying vehicles departed for Paturia in Manikganj. Unable to board, the bus waited for the next ferry.

“Right before our eyes, the bus fell into the river, but we could do nothing,” Monir said, adding that the accident happened around 5:15pm.

How or why the bus fell into the river remained unclear.

Locals rescued some of the survivors while the Fire Service and Civil Defence, army, police, Naval Police, and other agencies joined the efforts later. The fire service said divers from Paturia and Aricha terminals were called in.

Hundreds of onlookers, along with

Survivor Alif, an eight-year-old boy, was on the bus with his mother Josna Begum, 35, as she was returning to her workplace, a garment factory in Savar's Baipail area.

“When the bus was getting onto the ferry, it suddenly started to fall into the Padma. I was sitting on my mother's lap. As the bus was sinking into the water, my mother pushed me

upazila after hearing the news.

“I helped my Josna get on the bus. After I reached home, I was talking to her on the phone. At that time, Josna told me that the bus was falling into the Padma. After that, I couldn't hear anything else,” a tearful Saheda said.

Survivor Aziz was travelling with his pregnant wife Nazmira, 32, son Abdur Rahman, 6, and Nazmira's aunt

US still deciding how to resume nuclear tests: official

AFP, Washington

The United States has not yet decided how it will resume nuclear testing, a senior official said Tuesday, after President Donald Trump ordered an end to a decades-old moratorium.

Thomas DiNanno, the under secretary of state for arms control and international security, repeated that it would not be an atmospheric test of the sort seen at the start of the nuclear era.

“We are still assessing,” DiNanno told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

“We have made no decision specifically on how or what any testing program would look like.”

Trump said in October that the United States would resume nuclear testing for the first time since 1992.

Trump later allowed the expiration of New START, the last remaining treaty with Russia that limited deployment of nuclear warheads, as he called for a new agreement that also includes China, whose arsenal is much smaller than those of the other

two powers but quickly growing.

Another senior official, Christopher Yeaw, said last month that renewed US tests would be low-yield to match what the United States alleges China and Russia have secretly carried out.

Asked if the United States could instead carry out a larger detonation, DiNanno said, “I've heard no discussion of any atmospheric testing whatsoever.”

China has denied the allegations of secret testing, accusing the United States of creating an excuse to pressure it into a new nuclear agreement.

The US talk of new nuclear testing comes as the United States and Israel attack Iran in part over allegations that the cleric-run state was building a nuclear weapon, a prospect denied by Tehran and which most experts said was not imminent.

The United States is the only country to have used nuclear weapons in war, destroying the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, and Israel has a widely discussed but never officially acknowledged nuclear programme.

Three shown arrested in Star office attack case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three suspects were yesterday shown arrested in a case filed over vandalism, arson, and looting at The Daily Star's office in Dhaka.

They are: Saidur Rahman, 25; Abul Kashem, 33; and Azahar Ali, 33. All three had earlier been arrested in a separate case over vandalism and arson at the Prothom Alo office in the capital.

Excluding the three, 11 others had been arrested in the case by December 26 last year, and all are currently in jail, according to court records.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Aminul Islam Junaid yesterday showed Saidur, Kashem and Azahar arrested in the case following an application submitted by Sub-Inspector Jahirul Islam of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said a court staffer.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



People of all ages light candles in remembrance of the victims of the 'Black Night' of March 25, 1971, as Udichi Shilpigosthi and Chhatra Union hold a torch procession and candle-lighting programme at Shikha Chirantan in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan last night.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

REVIEW OF 133 ORDINANCES

JS panel flags 20 issues for clarification

UNB, Dhaka

A parliamentary special committee formed to review 133 ordinances issued during the interim government has identified 20 issues requiring further clarification.

Committee chairman Zainul Abedin disclosed the development to reporters yesterday after an adjourned meeting held at the Cabinet Room of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

"We have examined all 133 ordinances and completed discussions on them over the past two days," he said.

"On many of them, we are in full agreement. Four issues were identified yesterday (Tuesday), and several more were added today (yesterday), bringing the total to 20 where we believe further clarification is needed," he added.

The committee will reconvene on March 29 at 8:30pm, following the parliamentary session, to deliberate further on these outstanding matters, said Zainul, adding, "We hope we will be able to settle everything and reach final decisions in that meeting."

He also noted that there had been no objections

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



WASHINGTON SUMMIT Zubaida urges global action for children's welfare

BSS, Dhaka

Dr Zubaida Rahman, spouse of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, has called for stronger global cooperation to ensure the welfare and development of children while addressing a high-level summit in Washington, DC, at the invitation of US First Lady Melania Trump.

She joined over 40 first ladies and spouses of world leaders at the "Fostering the Future Together: Global Coalition Summit", held at the US Department of State, which focused on advancing children's well-being worldwide.



In her speech, Zubaida stressed that "the future of every nation is written in the lives of its children", shaped by care, education, and values. She expressed gratitude to the US first lady for convening the summit.

Highlighting Bangladesh's progress, she cited initiatives such as the Family Card and Farmer Card programmes, aimed at strengthening families and ensuring a safe, nurturing environment for children.

As a physician, she expressed her deep commitment to ensuring accessible, quality healthcare for every child, with an emphasis not only on treatment but also on prevention from the earliest stages of life.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Govt moves to unclog Dhaka roads

PM sets one-month timeframe for visible improvement in traffic conditions

HELEMUL ALAM

As part of government directives, Dhaka's two city corporations are set to take coordinated measures to ease traffic congestion, which include clearing footpaths and roads, introducing semi-automated traffic signals, and bringing rickshaws under a regulated framework.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Dhaka South City Corporation Administrator Abdus Salam yesterday said traffic congestion is not solely a matter of signal management but also involves clearing encroached footpaths, managing intersections, and improving overall coordination.

"Traffic is a multi-dimensional issue. All these issues are interconnected, and we are trying to address them in a coordinated way," he said.

Salam stressed the need to regulate street vendors, noting that unplanned occupation of roads and footpaths significantly contributes to congestion.

"We cannot allow the entire city to be taken over by vendors. If footpaths and roads are occupied, normal movement becomes impossible. To address this, we are planning designated evening markets in about eight locations across Dhaka. Vendors will be accommodated there so they do not occupy major roads," he said.

He added that the aim is not to remove livelihoods, but to ensure balance.

"We want vendors and rickshaws

to exist, but people must also be able to move freely. No one should be deprived of civic facilities. Vendors and rickshaw operators must come under a disciplined system while ensuring public convenience."

Describing the current situation



PROPOSED PLANS

Footpaths, roads to be cleared of encroachment

Street vendors to be relocated to designated evening markets

Rickshaws to be brought under regulation

Semi-automated traffic signal systems to be expanded

Battery-powered vehicles to be regulated

as unsustainable, Salam said Dhaka has nearly become paralysed due to congestion.

"This cannot continue. We must restore functionality to the city, and that requires cooperation from all

stakeholders."

He said locations for the proposed vendor markets will be finalised in consultation with law enforcement agencies. "Vendors cannot occupy major streets where traffic pressure is highest. Instead, we will provide alternative spaces," he added.

On battery-powered vehicles, Salam said discussions will be held with engineers from Buet. "These vehicles will remain, but they must be regulated. Issues such as speed control and braking systems need to be standardised."

He also said certain major roads, particularly VIP routes, may gradually be restricted to vehicles that meet specific speed and operational standards, while slower vehicles could be redirected to alternative routes.

Echoing similar concerns, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Administrator Shafiqul Islam Khan said multiple infrastructural and management issues are contributing to congestion.

"There are problems with footpaths, illegal structures, and U-turn systems. We have discussed these issues in meetings involving police and other agencies, and work is already underway," he said.

He added that meetings, including one with the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, have focused on resolving key infrastructural problems, such as unplanned streetlight poles in the middle of roads.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

15% journos face sexual harassment at work: survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifteen percent of Bangladeshi journalists said they had experienced sexual harassment at work, with women reporting significantly higher rates of verbal, online and physical harassment than men, according to a survey of 339 journalists.

Among the 339 respondents, seven women and two men reported that they had experienced rape.

Among women respondents, 51 percent reported verbal harassment, compared with 8 percent of men.

Online harassment was reported by 43 percent of women and 14 percent of men, while 21 percent of women and 4 percent of men reported physical harassment.

AT A GLANCE

Survey conducted on 339 journalists in 2025

51% women, 8% men reported verbal harassment

43% women, 14% men affected by online harassment

21% women, 4% men experienced physical harassment

Incidents of sexual harassment often remain hidden due to shame and social stigma. We feel uncomfortable and unsafe talking about it, but silence only allows the problem to continue.

ANGUR NAHAR MONTY
Coordinator at Women Journalists' Network Bangladesh

The findings were shared yesterday at the launch of the Sexual Harassment Response Protocol for Media Professionals, unveiled by BBC Media Action Bangladesh in partnership with the Women Journalists' Network Bangladesh at a hotel in Dhaka.

The survey, conducted in 2025 by the World Association of News Publishers in partnership with BBC Media Action, included 100 women and 190 men. Four respondents did not disclose their gender, while 45 preferred not to reveal their identity.

Arafat Siddique, senior media development officer at BBC Media Action, presented the findings, alongside the protocol.

The survey also highlighted weak institutional responses, particularly in cases of verbal harassment.

Arafat said institutional response was often weak. No action was taken in 43 percent cases of complaints by women and 60 percent of men regarding verbal harassment. Where action was taken, it was mostly limited to warnings.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

ACC seeks to show Masud arrested in graft case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed an application with a



Dhaka court to show Lt Gen (retd) Masud Uddin Chowdhury, a prominent figure in the army-backed caretaker government, arrested in a case filed over alleged embezzlement of Tk 119.32 crore through sending workers to Malaysia.

Judge (in charge) Mohammad Moin Uddin Chowdhury of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court set April 9 for hearing on the application filed by ACC Assistant Director Abul Kalam Azad, said bench assistant Riaz Hossain.

On March 11, the ACC lodged a case against Masud under the Penal Code, the Money

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Govt committed to ending 'mob culture': minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is determined to curb "mob culture" and firmly establish the rule of law in the country, said Information Minister Zahir Uddin Swapan yesterday.

He made the remarks at a press conference at the Secretariat, highlighting the initiatives taken during the first month of the new government.

Responding to a journalist's query, the minister acknowledged the ongoing challenges.

"Everyone knows our position on this. However, we must keep in mind that we have taken on the responsibility of establishing the rule of law against the backdrop of a long standing culture of lawlessness," Swapan said. "We hope to move past this long accumulated mess and bad memories to quickly establish the rule of law."

Asked whether the government would formulate a policy to tackle fake news and ensure job security for journalists, the minister said the government plans to hold strategic policy discussions with media representatives in the near future.

During the briefing, the minister outlined several key decisions and development projects across various sectors. He mentioned that over 37,000 families have already received "Family Cards" under a pilot project, with each family receiving cash assistance of Tk 2,500 monthly.

Additionally, "Farmers Cards" will be distributed to 21,014 farmers on an experimental basis from the upcoming Pahela Baisakh, providing an annual incentive of Tk 2,500, he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Morar Bhita: a '71 massacre site still frozen in fear

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Residents of Baruipara in Harhar village under Barishal's Gournadi upazila still avoid a place known as "Morar Bhita", which translates roughly to "house of the dead", 55 years since the Liberation War.

The site, hidden behind thick betel leaf gardens, swamps, and dense jungle, is not safe enough to enter even in daylight, say locals.

On May 15, 1971, around 150 villagers who had sought refuge there were killed by the Pakistani army. Since then, generations of men, women, and children have grown up hearing the stories of Morar Bhita in hushed tones and avoiding the site altogether.

However, on December 14 every year, local freedom fighters enter the overgrown area to pay floral tributes.

Avilash Nandi, 58, is believed to be the lone survivor from those caught in the direct line of fire at the site.

On the fateful day, Avilash,



3, was hiding in a betel leaf garden with his mother, Nirmala Nandi, 55, and his sister, Anita, 7. During the firing, both his mother and sister were killed, and a bullet struck his leg.

Citing what he later learned from relatives and villagers, Avilash said he was rescued while lying on the chest of his dead mother, covered in blood.

A bullet had pierced his leg, but a local doctor treated him well.

"Following my mother's

death on that day, I grew up with my sisters. I do not generally go to the site where the firing took place," he said.

Most residents of the village were Hindu farmers who cultivated betel leaves. The area was surrounded by gardens and jungle, which many believed would provide safety when news spread of the army's arrival.

However, according to villagers, local collaborators guided the Pakistani Army to

the spot, before they carried out an indiscriminate attack.

Freedom fighter Commander Kader Howlader said the army had set out from a camp at Ashwini Kumar School in Batajor.

"Hearing that army had arrived in the area, some villagers hid within the betel leaf garden, jungle, and swamps. Sensing their presence, the army fired at them indiscriminately, killing 152 people, including women, men, and children," he described.

The population of the village at the time was around 400, and nearly one-third of the village was killed. Most of the bodies were buried in a pit beside the betel garden, said locals.

Freedom fighter Ismat Hossain said although some bodies were taken away by relatives, many remained. "Some 92 bodies were buried there. Almost every family in Baruipara lost someone in the massacre."

Eyewitnesses carry vivid memories.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Swift end to war still unlikely

Analysts say small window remains for US-Iran talks after attacks eroded fragile trust

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump's dramatic description of "very strong talks" with Iran suggested the door to diplomacy has been flung open for what he said could be "a complete and total resolution of our hostilities in the Middle East".

But Iran almost immediately denied that talks had begun - and so far, there are only signs of small windows being opened - by a crack. One is the same window that was shattered during previous rounds of diplomacy, in February and in June last year, by US-backed Israeli attacks on Iran which destroyed the little trust that existed.

There's said to be some communication between lead negotiators in previous discussions - Iranian FM Abbas Araghchi and US envoy Steve Witkoff. But these conversations are described as very preliminary. And Tehran now sees the Witkoff track as subterfuge. "The statements of the US president are part of efforts to reduce energy prices and buy time for the implementation of his military plans," was the retort of Iran's foreign ministry, says an analyst.

Trump now says they're dealing with a "top person" in Iran. The unnamed individual being widely cited is Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf. He failed four times in presidential runs and described Iranians who took to the streets nationwide in February calling for change as "enemies and terrorists."

But in Trump's world, Ghalibaf is a strongman who could possibly bridge the divides between Iran's security and political establishments, reports BBC. "He's the last man standing who's seen as more ideologically flexible," said one source with knowledge of the various mediation efforts. "But even Trump said if he named him, they'd kill him, and then Israel immediately named him." This time, new countries are engaging in this age-old crisis including Pakistan, Egypt, and Turkey which have not been on the front lines of the war itself.

Trump likely believes this war has granted him additional leverage to get Iran to accept his conditions, and Iran senses it has not only fortified its position but has additional bargaining chips in the Strait of Hormuz," remarked Mohammad Ali Shabani, editor of Amwaj, media. In his post announcing the talks, Trump said he was postponing his threat to strike Iran's power plants for five days - meaning all eyes are on his new deadline - Friday, when the markets close.



PHOTO: AFP

A first responder surveys damage after Iranian missile strikes in central Israel, early yesterday. At least two Israelis, both men in their 50s, have been injured in a Hezbollah missile attack on the northern city of Karmiel.

Iranian strikes pose 'existential threat'

Gulf states tell UN, denounce attacks on energy, airports

AGENCIES

Gulf Arab states told the UN Human Rights Council yesterday they face an existential threat from Iran as they condemned Iranian attacks on their infrastructure, which the UN rights chief said might constitute war crimes.

The nearly month-long US-Israeli war on Iran has sparked large-scale Iranian retaliation in the form of drone and missile strikes on energy and civilian infrastructure in Gulf countries, killing civilians and driving up oil prices.

"We are seeing an existential threat to international and regional



security. This aggressive approach is undermining international law and sovereignty," Kuwait's ambassador Naser Abdullah H. M. Alhayen told the Geneva-based council.

Other Gulf states also denounced Iran's actions which they said were designed to spread terror.

Countries at the 47-member council will vote on a motion condemning Iran's strikes, asking Iran for reparation and asking the UN rights chief to monitor the situation.

Iran defended its actions, saying more than 1,500 civilians had been killed in the US-Israeli strikes so far.

"We fight on behalf of all of you against an enemy that, if not restrained today, will be beyond containment tomorrow," said Iran's ambassador to the UN in Geneva Ali Bahreini, referring to Israel.

Trump's 15-point plan to end war

AGENCIES

A media report late Tuesday revealed the details of a plan submitted by the US to Iran aimed at ending the war in the Middle East after President Donald Trump said Washington and Tehran had reached 15 "major points of agreements."

It includes the dismantling of all existing Iranian nuclear capabilities and a commitment that Iran will never pursue a nuclear weapon, Israel's Channel 12 reported.

There would be no production of weapons-grade nuclear material on Iranian soil and all enriched material would be handed over to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) within an agreed timeline, it said.

Iran's Natanz, Isfahan and Fordow nuclear sites would be decommissioned and destroyed and the IAEA would get full access to all information in regards to Iran's nuclear program, the report said, adding that Iran would cease the funding, directing and arming of its proxies in the region.

In addition, the Strait of Hormuz will remain open and a free maritime zone and "no one will block it."

A decision on Iran's missile program will be made later, but ranges and numbers "will need to be limited," the report added, noting that Iran will be able to use the missiles "only for self-defense purposes" in the future.



In return, all sanctions on Iran will be lifted, the report said, adding the country will also receive assistance in developing a civilian nuclear project in Bushehr. The removal of the "snapback threat" is also included among the points of the agreement, the report said, referring to the imminent, automatic reimposition of United Nations sanctions on Iran by the E3 countries - Britain, France and Germany. Hostilities have escalated since US and Israeli strikes on Iran began on February 28.

Iran has retaliated with repeated drone and missile strikes targeting Israel and Gulf countries hosting US military assets. Despite Trump's stated hopes for diplomacy, The Wall Street Journal reported that the United States is planning to send 3,000 soldiers from the elite 82nd Airborne Division to the Middle East.

Trump's envoys were negotiating a nuclear deal with Iran just two days before the United States and Israel launched the massive attack on February 28, killing Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on the first day. Iran had agreed in 2015 to broad restraints on its contested nuclear program in a deal that Trump ripped up during his first term as he joined Israel in applying pressure to the cleric-run state.



“This conflict has an unprecedented power to ensnare countries across borders and around the world.”

UN rights chief **Volker Turk** on Middle East war



JERUSALEM Israeli police kill Palestinian man

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli police officers killed a Palestinian man who tried to seize a weapon from an undercover security agent during an overnight operation in east Jerusalem, police said yesterday.

Officers from the Jerusalem district police and undercover border police carried out a raid in Jabal Mukaber neighbourhood, "targeting two suspects involved in terrorist activity," a police statement said.

"During the operation, one of the suspects attempted to grab a weapon from an undercover officer, who responded quickly and neutralised him," according to the statement.

The man's death was confirmed shortly after the incident. Palestinian official news agency WAFA identified the man as 21-year-old Qassem Shqairat.

Three other suspects were arrested and handed over to security authorities for further questioning, police added.

Jabal Mukaber is a Palestinian neighbourhood in east Jerusalem.



The day we became independent

Changing narratives about the glory of the Liberation War must end

The Independence Day holds special significance for Bangladesh as it marks the moment when we asserted our separate national identity and, following a nine-month-long, blood-soaked war, achieved our freedom. However, we must admit that even after 55 years, the narrative of our Liberation War is not uniform. Shifts in the narrative have occurred with the changing political winds of the day, not only during military rule but also under democratic governments. This has greatly damaged the legacy of our Liberation War and so must be stopped.

In this connection, as the new government considers revising textbooks, it must recognise how past revisions, reframings, and rewritings of history—as well as the idolisation of certain leaders while ignoring others—have affected all of us, especially younger generations. Many, unfortunately, feel disconnected from this defining chapter as constant revisions have created confusion and weakened the emotional bond with our struggle for independence. National history should unite; in our case, it has often deepened divisions. Thus, it is important that the new government led by BNP refrains from repeating past mistakes of revision and reframing in pursuit of partisan interests.

We also expect the government to stand firm against any attempt to undermine our Liberation War. As seen in the aftermath of the July uprising, a section of political actors used the people's upsurge against the autocratic Awami League regime to attack the Liberation War narrative as well as the values it stood for—democracy, nationalism, secularism, and socialism. According to a report in *Prothom Alo*, between August 5 and 14, 2024, its correspondents documented 1,494 incidents of sculptures, murals, reliefs, and memorials being desecrated and vandalised across 59 districts of the country. Targets included even the Mujibnagar Muktiyuddha Memorial Complex, muktiyoddha memorials, and *boddyobhumi* grounds representing the genocide perpetrated by the Pakistani army and its local collaborators. The interim government did little to restore these during its 18-month tenure.

The new government must act to protect and restore these sites, especially those representing the glory and pain of our nation's history. This is particularly urgent as global efforts grow to recognise the 1971 genocide. On March 20 this year, a US congressman introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives calling for formal recognition of the 1971 genocide, citing evidence from officials, journalists, and international bodies. At such a moment, any attempt to distort our history, under any ideological guise, must be firmly resisted.

However varied the narratives of the Liberation War may be, no compromise or inaccuracy should be tolerated in portraying the nation's independence struggle, the sacrifices of millions of lives, and the violation of thousands of women that eventually led to the achievement of independence. The heroes of different narratives may vary, as may interpretations of their respective contributions, but the historic significance of the war, the sacrifice of millions, and the bravery of freedom fighters must never be minimised. Undermining it would only harm the nation itself.

Rein in errant clinics, diagnostic centres

Drives must continue against non-compliant private medical facilities

We are deeply concerned by the irregularities revealed during the Directorate General of Health Services' (DGHS) latest drive against private clinics, hospitals, and diagnostic centres. It has brought to the fore a troubling picture of negligence, illegal practices, and disregard for patient safety in some private healthcare facilities in the capital. From intensive care units (ICUs) functioning without doctors to hospitals operating with expired licences and exceeding approved capacity, the situation points to systemic failures in healthcare oversight.

The case of Jamuna General Hospital, located at Muktiyoddha Tower-1 in Mohammadpur, is particularly alarming. ICU services in the hospital were reportedly being run without any dedicated doctors, leaving nurses to manage critically ill patients with only occasional support from on-call physicians. No ICU protocols were being followed and the operating theatre was found to be unhygienic. Equally disturbing was the situation at TG Multispecialty Hospital and Diagnostic Centre, where no doctors were found on duty and no proper appointment records existed. Both facilities were operating with expired licences.

The DGHS has shut down some of these errant clinics, closed certain ICUs, and issued show-cause notices to others in its recent drive. But the question remains: why were these facilities allowed to operate in such conditions for so long? According to a 2024 DGHS report, around 1,027 private hospitals, clinics, diagnostic centres, and blood banks across the country are operating without valid licences, revealing a prolonged failure of oversight. This must not continue.

For years, patients have complained about excessive charges, poor services, and unprofessional staff behaviour in private healthcare facilities. In the absence of accountability, effective monitoring, and consistent enforcement, these grievances have largely gone unaddressed. Many facilities continue to charge substantial fees for critical services like ICUs while failing to meet even the most basic standards of care. Patients, often unable to secure beds in public hospitals, are left with little choice but to turn to such establishments, unknowingly exposing themselves to grave risks. This is deeply worrying.

We urge the DGHS to conduct regular drives against errant, non-compliant private medical facilities and to enforce the rules strictly. All unauthorised facilities must either be brought under a proper legal framework or shut down. The DGHS must also be adequately staffed and empowered to ensure continuous monitoring. Implementing the Health Sector Reform Commission's recommendations—including setting up a service centre to expedite licensing and administrative processes for private hospitals, clinics, and diagnostic centres—is crucial. Ensuring safe and reliable private healthcare requires consistent vigilance, institutional reform, and strong accountability.

Independence and its discontents: For whom was 1971?



Dr Azfar Hussain is director of the graduate programme in social nnovation at Grand Valley State University in Michigan, US, where he also teaches interdisciplinary studies. He s also a summer distinguished professor of English and Humanities at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (LAB) and vice-president at the US-based Global Center for Advanced Studies (GCAS).

AZFAR HUSSAIN

History, too, bristles up, staging and restaging questions and concerns that remain unresolved. They persist, stubbornly, as we continue to inhabit a conjuncture marked by chasms and contradictions: between rhetoric and reality, between *what has been* and *what is yet to be*. And so, as we step into the 56th year of our independence, these contradictions compel a crucial, even urgent, question: whose independence is it, anyway?

Globally, at a moment when Donald Trump has come to embody the gangster logic of US imperialism at its fascistic height, and when Israel, as a Zionist settler-colonial power, works in close cahoots with that imperialism, while continuing their genocidal assault on Palestinians and expanding their war against Iran, the question returns with renewed urgency: whose independence is it, really?

And it is hardly surprising—yet no less outrageously anti-independence—that the newly elected BNP government, in its foreign ministry's recent statement on the imperialist war against Iran, failed to call a spade a spade—failed even to name, let alone condemn, the US and Israel. This silence is not incidental; it is symptomatic. For the stubborn historical fact remains that no government since 1972 has been genuinely or adequately critical of US imperialism—an imperialism that even opposed Bangladesh's Liberation War both diplomatically and militarily. But Bangladesh, as an independent state, was not born at a negotiating table. Its being-and-becoming was forged in struggle: in 1971, through a people's war that made independence not a concession but a gargantuan achievement. Its birth was not only an unprecedented event with its own rhythm, character, and content; it was also a rupture—a radical, insurrectionary interruption in the political history of South Asia.

Yet this rupture was no isolated singularity. It was tied to a genealogical horizon stretching far back, encompassing multiple forms of resistance by women, workers, peasants, and minorities, not only since 1947 but well beyond. Unlike other “postcolonial” states in South Asia, whose sovereignty was brokered across negotiating tables in the long shadow of World War II, Bangladesh emerged through an armed, collective uprising and war against the neo-colonial, militaristic, bureaucratic, oligarchic state of Pakistan—an uprising marked by genocide and the systematic, large-scale rape of women. Indeed,

Women, including those from Indigenous and other minority communities, played pivotal roles; yet their contributions remain elided in mainstream narratives dominated by ruling-class historiography. While middle-class Bangalee leaders occupy centre stage, how many of us know names like Kakat Heninchita, a courageous Khasia woman, or Princha Khen, a young Rakhine girl? What kind of independence did they achieve? What did the poor, who constituted the overwhelming majority of fighters, actually gain?

the blood-drenched emergence of Bangladesh remains the only instance in South Asia in which independence was wrested from within, not granted from above.

But the significance of 1971 does not reside there alone. The birth of Bangladesh dealt a decisive blow to the ideological foundations that underwrote the partition of India. It flagrantly dismantled the so-called “two-nation theory”—first incubated within Hindu majoritarian thought and later institutionalised by Muslim nationalism—by demonstrating, in the most historical-material terms, that religion alone cannot sustain a “nation.” At the same time, it unsettled

the competing myth of a singular, seamless Indian nationalism, exposing the inherent fissures and fragility—indeed, the fiction—of homogenising narratives imposed upon a profoundly heterogeneous subcontinent.

The emergence of a Muslim-majority Bangladesh grounded in ethno-linguistic Bangalee nationalism delivers a clear historical verdict: language, culture, and lived social realities matter more than theological or statist abstractions. No state, however ideologically armed, can indefinitely bind diverse peoples under the sign of religion alone. In this sense, Bangladesh's birth itself is a proposition, a living argument against all projects of forced unity, whether religious or secular-nationalist.

There is no doubt: without the Liberation War of 1971, there would be no Bangladesh. It remains our brightest historical achievement—the defining moment of our political history. And yet, the moment we say this, the question presses forward, insistent, unsettling, necessary as it is: whose independence have we achieved?

For what is increasingly evident is this: independence has been monumentalised, but not fully materialised.

The national ruling class—

the overwhelming majority of fighters, actually gain?

To celebrate Independence Day while erasing these struggles is not a celebration; it is a ritual emptied of history, a performance without memory.

And memory itself is a battlefield. True, history was violently reduced to slogans—“*Muktijuddher chetona*”

unsuccessful, yet generative of political consciousness and collective rage. And I think it would be a grave historical injustice—an affront to our conscience and to the people themselves—if a mass uprising like that were reduced to a “conspiracy,” as some would have it, or dismissed as the handiwork of opposition-linked forces. Such erasures are not interpretations; they

What is required now is genuine connection-making, on behalf of those who continue to bear the weight of history: women, workers, poor peasants, and marginalised communities who constitute the overwhelming majority of Bangladesh. Democracy, if it is to mean anything at all, must serve that majority in real, material terms, not merely the upper and middle classes. And independence? It must mean the independence of that majority—economic, political, and cultural—not the ornamental sovereignty of a privileged few.

repeated to exhaustion, stripped of context, co-opted by authoritarian power. Partisan, class-driven repetitions masquerade as historical knowledge. We forget the *longue durée* of resistance: from the division of Bengal, to the Language Movement, to mass uprisings, denied electoral mandates, and the accumulation of economic, political and cultural grievances, to name but a few explosive conjunctures in our history. 1971 was not a beginning; it was an eruption, the culmination of histories still insufficiently reckoned with.

But true, Bangladesh's history has been written in blood, even as it remains erased in official narratives. Mainstream historians often apotheosise their “heroes,” but there are *other*—and *othered*—historians: repeated to exhaustion, stripped of context, co-opted by authoritarian power. Partisan, class-driven repetitions masquerade as historical knowledge. We forget the *longue durée* of resistance: from the division of Bengal, to the Language Movement, to mass uprisings, denied electoral mandates, and the accumulation of economic, political and cultural grievances, to name but a few explosive conjunctures in our history. 1971 was not a beginning; it was an eruption, the culmination of histories still insufficiently reckoned with.

are distortions. The uprising belonged to no single party; it belonged to the people, the masses, thousands of whom shed their blood, many fatally.

That uprising—of which I was a direct, unrepentant participant—reclaimed the three foundational principles of 1971, long violated by successive regimes. It also dismantled the Awami League's manipulative binary of “freedom fighter” versus “razakar,” exposing its inherent inconsistency and authoritarian deployment. It is not for nothing that the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement platform repeatedly declared, “A new Bangladesh will be built through the student-citizen uprising—one where equality, justice, and human dignity will prevail.” We must hold on to that declaration. To



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

including the fascist Awami League and the BNP (whose own fascist tendencies during previous rules are well documented, as Badruddin Umar has already demonstrated in his superbly researched work), along with other ruling class formations, not to mention Jamaat-e-Islami, which opposed independence in 1971 and was complicit in genocide (to say the least)—has, in various ways, violated the promises of equality, social justice, and human dignity, the three core principles enshrined in the Proclamation of Independence on April 10, 1971. For women, poor peasants, workers, Indigenous communities, and minorities—ethnic, linguistic, religious, and gender/sexual—who fought, bled, and died, where is that promised equality? Where is justice? Where is human dignity?

To ask these questions is also to ask: who were the freedom fighters? Not merely a handful of leaders elevated to near-myth, but overwhelmingly peasants, labourers, and the lower middle classes; women who resisted, organised, nursed, and fought; even children who bore the brunt of a guerilla war; and countless others across communities, whose names mainstream historiography refuses to remember.

Women, including those from Indigenous and other minority communities, played pivotal roles; yet their contributions remain elided in mainstream narratives dominated by ruling-class historiography. While middle-class Bangalee leaders occupy centre stage, how many of us know names like Kakat Heninchita, a courageous Khasia woman, or Princha Khen, a young Rakhine girl? What kind of independence did they achieve? What did the poor, who constituted

peasants, workers, women, minorities. They not only make history; they keep it alive through storytelling, through memory, through collective struggle.

To reclaim that history is an ethical and political task. It requires wresting history away from sycophancy, distortion, and spectacle, and returning it to the people. It requires refusing the comfort of victimhood even as we remember violence; resisting the conversion of nationalism into exclusion; and recognising, with clarity, that a people who fought oppression cannot afford to become oppressors.

Let me now turn, conjuncturally, to the relationship between 1971 and the July uprising of 2024.

There have been reactionary attempts—by apologists of Awami League and by Jamaat supporters alike—to pit 1971 against 2024. Yet the historical record resists such attempts and erasures. The July uprising repeatedly foregrounded the unfulfilled principles of 1971—*equality*, *social justice*, and *human dignity*—thus keeping the spirit of independence at the very centre of its discourse.

It was, in fact, the largest mass uprising in the history of Bangladesh. Marked by the sacrifice of so many individuals, it inaugurated an unprecedented moment: for the first time, a politically unaffiliated, student-led movement toppled an entrenched fascist autocracy, forcing Sheikh Hasina to flee. And its significance lies not only in its outcome but in its form: a decentralised, non-hierarchical movement that attests to the creativity and determination of both youth and the people. Its immediate success was rooted in more than 15 years of accumulated struggles—often

remember is to resist; to forget is to face defeat. Independence lives in memory.

Let us reject the false binary that pits 1971 against 2024. They are not antagonists but historical echoes, linked struggles animated by the same unfinished demands. As my favourite African revolutionary, Amílcar Cabral, reminds us, “Claim no easy victories.”

As I have argued elsewhere, every progressive mass movement is incomplete and paradoxical—never fully victorious, never entirely defeated. The struggle persists, even as there are attempts, domestic and external, to discredit both the gains of 2024 and the legacy of 1971.

What is required now is genuine connection-making, on behalf of those who continue to bear the weight of history: women, workers, poor peasants, and marginalised communities who constitute the overwhelming majority of Bangladesh. Democracy, if it is to mean anything at all, must serve that majority in real, material terms, not merely the upper and middle classes. And independence? It must mean the independence of that majority—economic, political, and cultural—not the ornamental sovereignty of a privileged few.

But let us be clear: no such independence can be realised within a political culture that remains stubbornly middle-class centric, Dhaka-bound, dynastic, and beholden to money and the market. To speak of equality, justice, and human dignity under such conditions is to speak in promises perpetually deferred. The task, then, is not reformist tinkering but a radical reorientation—one that returns independence to the people who made it possible, and who continue, even now, to struggle to claim it.

INDEPENDENCE DAY 2026

The unfinished truth of 1971: Genocide, mass rape, and justice



Dr MA Hasan
is war veteran, physician, human rights defender,
and forensic anthropologist.

MA HASAN

In the post-1971 period, a significant amount of information about Pakistan-sponsored murders, assaults, rapes, and other atrocities has come to light. Much of it came from interviews, personal narratives, confessions, and individual experiences, rather than systematic professional or scientific research. We know that around 30 lakh people were martyred in the Liberation War. While the precise figures may be debated, the scale of mass killings is beyond dispute.

Estimates suggest there are around 5,000 small and large killing grounds across the country, many of which remain unaccounted for. Among these, approximately 1,200 killing sites and mass graves have been identified. The evidence gathered from these sites points clearly to the perpetrators responsible for the killing of lakhs of Bangalee people. After independence, the government of Bangladesh announced that around two lakh women had been assaulted by Pakistani forces during the war. This figure is widely regarded as an understatement, as it was based on broad assumptions rather than systematic calculation.

Research conducted at Sweden's Uppsala University suggested figures ranging from two to four lakh and concluded that most of the assaulted women were Muslims. Dr Geoffrey Davis, an Australian physician who worked in Bangladesh as part of an international humanitarian programme assisting women who had been raped during the Liberation War, estimated the number of rape victims at 450,000. Later, research by a professional team in Bangladesh placed the figure at more than 467,000, noting that many Hindu as well as Muslim women had been excluded from earlier calculations.

The research, conducted between 1991 and 2002 across 42 districts and their police stations, drew on countless interviews. The



'More than one crore people were registered as refugees in India during the war of 1971, and nearly two crores were internally displaced.'

ARCHIVE: ANWAR HOSSAIN

findings, based on 629 documented cases, suggested that at least 467,000 women were assaulted in 1971. The team of doctors and experts, including forensic anthropologists, was able to identify 629 survivors who were alive at the time of the interviews and residing in the country. The study further showed that among the assaulted women, 56.50 percent were Muslims, 41.44 percent were

collaborators in Bangladesh.

Statistics indicate that 871,000 Hindu families fled to India during that time, including around 2,625,000 female refugees over the age of ten. If even one in ten of them were subjected to sexual violence, the number of victims among refugees alone would be 262,500.

Even the most conservative estimates

suggest that no fewer than two lakh Hindu women and girls never returned to Bangladesh. As rape was systematically used as a weapon of war, and as the intent of the campaign was to target and eliminate Hindus in particular, the state estimate of 30 lakh deaths must be understood in that broader context. In any case, it is important to recognise that in no historical genocide have there been exact headcounts or precise

houses, and educational institutions, as well as railway stations and jails, were used as killing sites and as venues for mass rape, gang rape, and rape in custody.

Only around 30 percent of the remains were found on land, while the remaining 70 percent were washed away, as bodies were dumped into wetlands and riversides. Even manholes, water wells, large drains, and sewage tanks were not spared. More than one crore people were registered as refugees in India during the war of 1971, and nearly two crore were internally displaced. It was one of the largest instances of enforced migration and displacement of innocent civilians within such a short span of time. Many displaced people, including refugees, either died of disease or were killed by the perpetrators and their collaborators during their perilous journeys or while in hiding.

The Pakistan Army committed some 39 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including genocide by killing, genocide by causing serious bodily or mental harm, genocide by deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction, and genocidal rape.

The nation failed to indict the perpetrators in a proper court of law due to the unlawful clemency declared by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. No single individual, not even a dictator or a king, can take such a decision without constitutional and parliamentary backing, particularly when the crimes were committed against humanity as a whole. There were discussions of truth and reconciliation, but where there is a denial of truth and no regret, remorse, or sincere confession, such a process cannot take root. Behind the scenes, efforts were made towards such a solution, but they did not succeed, as the state did not approach the UN security council for a mandate.

We must understand that justice and righteousness are realised through accountability, through the vindication of rights and the redress of wrongs. The most serious crimes of concern to the international community, notably genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, as occurred in Bangladesh in 1971, must not go unpunished. Effective prosecution must be ensured, even in the absence of the accused.

When 1971 enters the feed



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KHAIRUL HASSAN JAHIN

It comes to the palm before the page, on a national day of remembrance related to the 1971 war of independence.

A youngster picks up their phone and starts scrolling. It starts with a black-and-white image of refugees, a serious tune, and a label reading "sacrifice." Then there is a swipe followed by a brief video of a survivor talking. Then perhaps a branded tribute, a school parade, a comedy clip, an advertisement. What does this unique, modern-day barrage of tributes imply? The past does not disappear; it glimpses, subsides, re-emerges, and is swept down the stream that carries all the rest.

This is among the distinguishing features of public memory in our era: 1971 is no longer remembered mainly through family stories, textbooks, memorials, museums, and newspapers. It has become an element of feeds, clips, search results, recommendations, reposts, subtitles, memes, playlists, and AI-generated summaries. It goes more quickly, farther, and more democratically than ever. It also moves through structures that are not created to be historical but to be visible, engaging, and memorable.

This is why the question before us has changed. What becomes of a foundational national memory when it is put into the infrastructure of sorting attention?

This is the point of memory politics in the age of algorithms.

The politics of memory is never only about the past. It concerns who gets to define the nation through selective remembrance and selective silence, and which parts of the history are elevated, ritualised, or pushed aside.

The institutions that mediated this memory were relatively obvious over the decades. Survivors and witnesses were present. Some families kept their stories a secret, sometimes agonisingly. Political actors used the war to exercise moral authority. It had historians, journalists, textbook writers, filmmakers, and museums. These schools or points of reference did not generate a pure memory; rather it possessed their omissions, their fallacies, and their black holes. But at least theirs was an

identifiable role.

Digitalisation has broadened that landscape. It has made fragile documents, testimonies, and photographs easier to preserve, search, and circulate. Students and researchers worldwide can now experience the pieces of 1971 without waiting for a gatekeeper to open the room.

The difference between an archive and a feed is not obvious. An archive is constructed with preservation in mind. It raises the question about what a document is, its origin, the manner of cataloguing it, and on what grounds it ought to be read. Meanwhile, a circulation-based feed is constructed with optimisation in mind. It poses the question of what will be clicked, watched, reacted to, shared, or recommended. The archive appreciates provenance; the digital platform is performance-oriented. The archive is sorted for retrieval; the feed is structured in a way that is easy to notice.

As soon as 1971 pops up on the feed, it no longer seems like history to the public—it appears as content. Its appearance is influenced by systems that favour speed, emotion, signal clarity, and the repeatability of engagement. This does not necessarily lead to falsehood, but it does strain the memory to make it more readable for the platform. Complicated histories are pushed to be succinct. Subtlety is a bad rival of certitude. Visual fragments are created out of long moral and political reasoning. Testimony is clipped. Grief is aestheticised. Patriotism is packaged.

It is easier to consume a war of unprecedented magnitude and cruelty rather than comprehend it. The genocide, the refugee exodus, the asymmetry of experience, and the post-traumatic afterlives may all be flattened into a series of emotionally resonant, highly viral symbols.

This marks a significant change in memory politics. Previously, one had to be concerned mainly with denial, censorship, and ideological rewriting. Such threats did not disappear, but today, the process of remembering is also mediated by commercial apparatus, the logic of which is neither archival nor pedagogical. There is no

need to deny history any longer to render it weak; one can simply shred it, speed it up, seasonalise it, and devour it in the incessant race to attention.

That seasonalisation is nothing new. The digital public is flooded with memories on some dates, particularly in March and December. Speeches circulate, posters return, archival photographs reappear, slogans are revived. For a day or two, the

repressed testimonies. The diaspora also encounters 1971 through digital titbits that inspire further research.

And thus, it is not a question of whether digital memory is good or bad. That is too blunt a question. The actual issue is whether democracy is accessible for commercial formatting. Is it possible to expand participation in memory preservation without giving memory over to the logic of virality?



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

nation appears to remember; then the traffic drops and the topic sinks within the feed. Memory comes in spikes. It comes as a fad and goes as a fad. The past thus is not forgotten—it is simply rendered intermittent.

This is important since the memory of a nation cannot endure as a periodical upsurge. People do not stay historically literate by becoming twice-yearly ceremonially expressive. But when 1971 is experienced largely in the form of commemorative traffic, commemoration risks being performative rather than educative.

Critique of the digital present must not be nostalgic; the analogue era was also afflicted by silence, isolation, and familial memory. Digital culture, too, has allowed overlooked testimonies, local histories, and diasporic rediscovery. It has given us new methods to access the past, despite the inaccuracies. The youth retile old films, scan family documents, revitalise neighbourhood histories, and distribute

AI compresses and counterfeits memory with cloned voices, synthetic testimony, and fabricated authority. A chatbot can settle a dispute or remove a picture's provenance, which undermines evidence of a historical event as complicated as 1971. Histories of atrocity depend on confidence in testimony, records, images, documents, and the labour of verification. As soon as synthetic media is a commodity, misusing that trust becomes easier. False material may be added to the stream. Real content can be rejected as a counterfeit. The conditions of proof themselves are in a state of flux. This poses both an ethical and an epistemic dilemma. The witness is not crude. The words of the survivor are never just emotionally strong resources to cut-and-paste to get them interested. The corpses are not aesthetic material. Mass violence is a memory that must be recalled responsibly in context, with restraint and source fidelity. The more technologically reproducible the memory is, the more these ethics are required.

So what would a more severe digital memory politics entail in the case of Bangladesh?

First, it would see archives as infrastructure instead of decoration. Memorial sentiment varies across countries. It takes strong institutions to safeguard oral histories, newspapers, photos, local records, and other documents. These resources should be searchable by students and researchers. The latter will win when it is hard to find serious archives and easy to find shallow material.

Second, protecting context as a social good is important. It is crucial to know where the photo came from and the historical context of the testimony. A viral fragment should help you understand more. Exposure must result in understanding. The clip should not end the story.

Third, civic literacy should include knowing how to use digital history. People need to know about 1971 and how to judge what they see. They need to be able to trace an image, check a quote, tell the difference between archival and stylised tributes, and spot fake authority. In the age of algorithms, memoirs that are not checked are structurally weak.

Bangladesh must protect and discover its history simultaneously. More and more, search engines, social media sites, recommendation systems, and AI interfaces decide what people see first and what they don't. Ranking is now a part of the politics of remembering. If a country gives its history to the market, it may lose control over how it is shared.

The fight over 1971 is taking a new shape, however. The old questions remain. Who is remembered? Who is left out? Who speaks for the nation? Who is supposed to define sacrifice? But the terrain has shifted. It is no longer threatened only by silence but also by noise, not just by erasure but also by endless circulation without depth.

It is a disturbing aspect of the present. A society may seem overwhelmed by memory and historically weakened. It can write all the time and yet know precious little of substance. It may confuse the visibility with the seriousness. It can absorb the 1971 symbols and still lose its attention discipline.

It is not to save 1971, then, out of the digital world. That would be inconceivable and, frankly, stupid. The challenge is greater: to construct historical forms of digital memory that don't break history down into bite-size content. It can also lose it because the past is forever on the screen, circulating, beautifully edited, instantly shareable, and slowly losing weight.

TO SAVE A FLOWER

Bangladesh's birth from lyrics and bullets

DOWEL BISWAS

In April 1971, on a char in Chapainawabganj, Rajshahi, a 15-year-old boy sat beside a radio, adjusting the dial until the voices held long enough to understand. News travelled unevenly to villages like Babupur, but that radio carried fragments of a turning history: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 7 March address, reports of escalating violence, the early calls to resist. Between those announcements came something else, songs from Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra.

From the static emerged a line: "Mora ekti phool ke bachabo bole juddho kori..."—we fight to save a flower. Within days, that boy, my late father, would cross the Padma to join the freedom fighters near the Indian border. Hundred others did the same.

Those broadcasts did more than inform.



They shaped how the war was felt. Bulletins told listeners what was happening; songs suggested why it mattered, sometimes signalling the freedom fighters on safer roads, and information that would be crucial to win the Liberation War. In a time when villages were cut off and fear travelled quickly, music created a shared emotional ground.

Most of the songs from 1971 imagined the country through intimate, emotional images. Bangladesh—the yet-to-be-won and not-yet-actualised nation—appeared as a flower, a mother, a stretch of soil held close to the body. These are more than mere metaphors; they are organic, never forced, offering a window into how we Bangalees perceive and feel our country. This lyricism reshaped how people understood the stakes of the war. When a country is a flower and a mother, who would not give their life and shed blood to protect it? It is instinctive.

"Purbo digonte surjo utheche, rokto laal..." The landscape itself entered the music—the rivers, the red earth, the fields that defined life in rural Bengal. In wartime, those familiar elements took on new meaning. The songs suggested that what was being defended was not just land but a way of belonging to it.



As the war intensified, these broadcasts became a steady presence for those inside the country and for those who had crossed borders. Fighters listened between operations. Families listened while waiting for news that often did not arrive. The songs carried grief, but also a quiet confidence that the struggle had purpose.



In "O amar desher mati, tomar pore thekai matha..." the land is described as something held within one's own life, on someone's forehead like deities. These lyrics framed belonging in emotional terms that many listeners immediately recognised. The songs gave fighters, survivors, and civilians caught in the war what they needed most: a sustaining sense of morale and resilience.

Remembrance, too, found its place in music. **Salam Salam Hajar Salam** became a way of honouring those who had already fallen. The repetition carried a sense of collective memory—an acknowledgement that the war was producing losses that could not always be counted or named.

The songs of 1971 did not appear in isolation. Earlier cultural struggles echoed through them. **Ekusher Gaan**, rooted in the Language Movement, circulated widely during the war years and reminded listeners that resistance had a longer history. Other songs served as calls to unity. **Joy Bangla, Banglar Joy** condensed the mood of the moment into lines that could be easily repeated and shared.

Even compositions written long before the war took on new meaning. "Jodi tor daak shune keu na aase tobe ekla cholo re"

was heard differently in that moment. Its message of persistence felt less philosophical and more immediate for those living through uncertainty.

To hear "Mora ekti phool ke bachabo bole juddho kori..." today is not simply to revisit a moment in the past. It is to remember how the country was once imagined—through voice, metaphor and shared emotion—before it was secured by victory.

Together, these songs created something more than morale. They offered a way of understanding the country while it was still being fought for. Rather than presenting Bangladesh as a distant ideal, the music placed it close—within nature, daily life, within memory, within language.

This is part of why the songs endure. They helped people hold onto a sense of continuity during a time of upheaval. The war disrupted everything—the mass killings, the displacement, the breakdown of communication, the rupture of ordinary life—but the songs remained a thread connecting listeners across distance and circumstance. Through these songs, Banglaee people didn't just live in fear; they endured it and conquered it within themselves. The songs reminded them of their nation's value, placing the country on a pedestal higher than their own lives and moral strength.

Decades later, when the same songs, including the national anthem **Amar Shonar Bangla**, **Ami Tomay Bhalobashi**, were sung or played at public events and Independence Day gatherings, I saw my father and his fellow freedom fighters standing upright under the freely flowing flag. Their eyes were teary, but this time with pride and reassurance—they had freed our country, establishing it as an independent, sovereign nation. The valour shone through, and I knew that if ever another war threatened our existence, thousands like me would follow the same path to protect our country—a flower, a mother, a river, the setting sun, and a serene picture named Bangladesh.



NEWS

Witnesses to genocide

FROM PAGE 1

An emergency call shattered the calm.

Students were felling trees to barricade streets, and key West Pakistani leaders, including President Yahya Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had abruptly left Dhaka.

By around 10:00pm, a second call brought worse news -- the crackdown had begun.

Together with the guests (trapped at his house), the US consul general spent much of that night on the roof as they watched "...with horror the constant flash of tracer bullets across the dark sky and listened to the more ominous clatter of machine gun fire and the heavy thud of tank guns," wrote Blood in The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh: Memoirs of an American Diplomat.

There was particularly heavy firing around the police lines and the East Pakistan Rifles barracks. "We could see many fires burning, some of them in old Dacca," he wrote.

Siddik Salik, public relations officer of the Pakistan Army, described the night: "The gates of hell had been cast open."

Salik wrote, "I watched the harrowing sight from the verandah for four hours. The prominent feature of this gory night was the flames shooting to the sky. At times, mournful clouds of smoke accompanied the blaze, but soon they were overwhelmed by the flaming fire trying to lick at the stars. The light of the moon and the glow of the stars paled before this man-made furnace."

There was a curfew throughout the entire day, and it was lifted the following day (March 27) at 7:00am for several hours.

"We hurried to use this window of opportunity to check on the safety of the American community and to begin to piece together the events of the night of March 25, the horror of which we sensed but could not yet document," Blood wrote.

On March 27, the US consular office submitted its first situation report saying that the Pakistan military was in complete control, that the crackdown on Bangalee nationalists had been carried out

swiftly, efficiently and often with ruthless brutality.

In another dispatch on March 28, the US office reported that despite Radio Pakistan's announcements, life had not returned to normal in Dhaka. It reported a continuous flow of people streaming out with their meagre possessions.

"We now are informed that the Army is attempting to pick up all Awami League leaders including MNAs, MPAs, and student leaders. All roads out of the city are blocked, hence it is impossible for well-known figures to slip into the countryside," the situation report said.

'THE NIGHT ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE'

A New Zealand-based independent scholar, Samuel Jaffe, writes in his book "An Internal Matter: The US, Grassroots Activism and the Creation of Bangladesh" that the Nixon administration's response to Operation Searchlight was muted and cautious, with the White House "tilting" heavily in favour of Pakistan.

But for the general American expatriate community in erstwhile East Pakistan, the military crackdown provoked shock, outrage, and, for some, a sense of resolve.

The Rohdes were among many such Americans.

Jon E Rohde, working on cholera research at what is today icddr,b, and his wife Candy woke up to gunfire and explosions. They rushed to their balcony to see what was happening. Candy watched in horror as American-made Patton tanks rolled out from the nearby cantonment and moved towards the city centre. Their neighbour, Alfred Sommer, remembers it as "the night all hell broke loose".

"I'll never forget because my wife and I were asleep, and we woke up at about 1:30am, hearing 'Poof! Poof! Poof!' in the background. My wife says, 'What's that?'" Jaffe quotes Sommer in his book.

They ran up to their roof where they found Dhaka ablaze.

"... Old Dhaka was just burning in the distance," Jaffe quoted Sommer as saying.

Nearby, Richard and Nancy Guerrant awoke to their night guard

calling for help: "Saheb! Saheb! Let me in, they're shooting outside!"

They let him in.

For months after they returned to America, Richard remembers that his young son would hear a car backfiring and say, "Mom, they are shooting again."

Surrounded by an unfolding campaign of terror, several young American expatriates, during a break in the curfew the next day, ventured out. As the Rohdes cycled towards the cholera hospital, they saw the burning remains of houses.

BLOOD ON THE WALLS

The roads were clogged, Candy Rohde remembered, with "streams of terrified people" leaving the city, carrying what little they could.

The following day, the group visited Dhaka University, which had attracted much of the Pakistani Army's wrath. The scene shocked Marty Chen, who recalled, "We pulled up to the apartment building in the university, and I said 'oh my gosh!' because the front steps were just caked with blood..."

Candy described her first impressions as a shaken survivor showed them inside a student hall: "Walking up the steps to the entrance, we noticed the walls are heavily pockmarked from countless rounds of gunfire.

"There are red streaks as if wounded or dead bodies have been dragged across it. Although gore is spattered everywhere, the most awful sight to me is finding the bloody prints of a student's bare feet. Wounded, he must have run to find refuge in the bathroom, where the tracks suddenly come to an end."

Henry Mosley, another doctor (cholera researcher), recalls "blood on the walls" where "subversive" academics were killed in the hallways: "it was an empty building by that time."

In the narrow streets of Old Dhaka, Marty and Lincoln Chen walked through the burning, bullet-ridden remains of Shankhari Bazaar, a Hindu neighbourhood. There, they found houses "razed to the ground" and piles of "bodies and ash".

GROUND WITNESSES

Jon wrote a letter to Senator William B Saxbe on April 17, 1971, after his

evacuation, in which he described in stark detail how the Pakistan Army had begun its genocidal campaign.

Senator Saxbe presented this letter to the Senate on April 29, according to the book "Bangladesh Documents".

After two days of loud explosions and continual chatter of machine guns, they took advantage of a break in the curfew to drive through the city. "In the old city we walked through the remains of Nayer Bazaar, where Moslem and Hindu woodcutters had worked, now only a tangle of iron and sheet and smouldering ruins," Jon had written.

He wrote that complete documentation was difficult due to the thorough search of everyone leaving Dhaka. The young medic noted that complete censorship was facilitated with the burning of three prominent dailies -- the People, the Ittefaq, and the Sangbad.

According to "Bangladesh Documents", another letter from James F Ragin to Senator Gordon Allott, and his address to the Senate on July 14, 1971, also vividly describes Pakistan Army's brutality.

The senator described how people were executed at Sadarghat. He said that troops attacked the terminal on the morning of March 26. A machine gun was installed on the terminal roof and all men, women, and children were fired upon.

Inspection of the terminal on March 29 revealed pools of dried blood on the terminal floor. The toilets were completely soiled and soaked with blood.

According to a student witness, people waiting for boats at the terminal were all killed. After the massacre, bodies were dragged into buses and burned. On March 29, corpses were still floating in the Buriganga River adjacent to the terminal.

According to an American missionary living in Old Dhaka, machine guns were placed at the ends of the street and soldiers attacked the entire area without warning on the morning of March 28.

Independence Day today

FROM PAGE 1

fly-past will be held at the National Parade Square, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations.

Shahabuddin and Tarique will be present at the event, which will be open to the public.

On the eve of the occasion, the two issued separate messages.

The objectives of independence were to ensure political and economic freedom, establish a society free from exploitation, uphold the dignity of every citizen and strengthen the empowerment of people at all levels, Shahabuddin said.

"I also pay a humble tribute to Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, Bir Uttam, along with all valiant freedom fighters, the persecuted mothers and sisters, the national leaders and organisers, and the countless people from all walks of life who made outstanding and significant contributions to our historic struggle for freedom," he added.

Tarique remembered with profound respect the nation's finest sons, whose sacrifices yielded an independent and sovereign Bangladesh.

"The Great Independence Day inspires us anew with the spirit of courage, sacrifice and patriotism. The fundamental goal of independence was to establish a Bangladesh that is free from discrimination, and to be democratic, peaceful and prosperous," he added.

In a letter to Shahabuddin, Indian President Droupadi Murmu yesterday extended the neighbouring country's felicitations.

"India and Bangladesh are bound by a shared history, deep cultural linkages and enduring linguistic traditions that form the foundation of our close partnership," she said.

National dailies will bring out special supplements while Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television, private radio stations and television channels will air special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

Differerent political parties as well as socio-cultural and professional organisations have drawn up elaborate programmes to observe the day.

Ships of the Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Coast Guard will be open to visitors at Chattogram Port, Mongla Port and Payra Port, as well as river terminals such as Sadarghat, Pagla Ghat and Barishal Launch Terminal from 9:00am to sunset.

Coast Guard vessels will also be open to visitors at Chandpur and Munshiganj launch ghats, reports BSS.

To mark the day, Tarique yesterday unveiled a commemorative postage stamp.

Exhibition football matches, T20 cricket tournaments and kabaddi competitions will be organised at the district and upazila level.

Cinema halls across the country will screen Liberation War-based films free of charge, while government and private museums will remain open to visitors without tickets from morning to evening.

Recreational centres for children will also remain open.

Cultural programmes will be held at tourist spots nationwide. Special prayers will be offered at mosques, temples, churches, pagodas and other places of worship, seeking eternal peace for martyred freedom fighters, good health for living freedom fighters and national progress.

Special meals will be arranged at the government hospitals, prisons, rehabilitation centres, orphanages, disability welfare centres, old-age homes and daycare centres across the country to mark the day.

Two Russian navy ships

FROM PAGE 2

and visit the navy training base.

The Russian ships are scheduled to leave Bangladesh waters on March 27.

The detachment of ships of Russia's Pacific Fleet departed Vladivostok on February 12, 2026, for a long-distance, Asia-Pacific deployment.

Previously, as part of their international activities, the Russian Navy ships made friendly calls at the port of Georgetown in Malaysia, the port of Thilawa in Myanmar, and the port of Visakhapatnam in India.

DGHS drive opens can of worms

FROM PAGE 12
bid to curb irregularities.
ANOMALIES EVERYWHERE

A team from DGHS, along with a mobile court of the Dhaka District Administration, yesterday resumed drives in the Chankharpool area, where Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain visited several medical facilities on Tuesday night.

One of the facilities inspected was Prime TG Diagnostic and Consultation Centre, located on the first floor of a small building with a very narrow passage.

The centre had obtained permission as a Category-C facility, which allows only basic tests.

However, the team found evidence that it was conducting tests that should be carried out at Category-B centres by qualified pathologists and radiologists.

The facility had also launched Prime TG Blood Bank and Consultation Centre about eight months ago without approval, although setting up a blood bank requires separate authorisation.

Mamun Khan, a marketing promotion officer of the blood bank, said they collect blood from one to two donors daily.

In response to a query, he said they had filed an application seeking approval, but DGHS officials said they found no such application.

In this context, the mobile court, led by Executive Magistrate Shahriar Ashraf, sealed the blood bank and fined the diagnostic centre Tk 60,000.

Authentic Diagnostic and Consultation was established in 2018. In 2024, the authorities took steps to set up a 50-bed Authentic Hospital in the same building.

The team found that the licences of both facilities had expired in June last year. The hospital also does

not have an emergency department.

Although a 50-bed hospital is required to have at least 15 doctors and 30 nurses, the team found only one doctor on duty at the time of the drive.

The hospital authorities had submitted a list of 20 doctors while obtaining approval, but the doctor present during the inspection could not recognise any of them.

Mizanur Rahman, chief executive officer of the hospital, said they had applied for licence renewal but failed to provide any evidence to support the claim.

More than 10 doctors work at the hospital, but they usually arrive after 2:00pm as they are engaged at other facilities he said adding that although the hospital received approval for 50 beds, only a small number of patients are admitted.

Patients are aware the hospital does not have an emergency department and that operations are conducted after 2:00pm, he said.

In this context, DGHS decided to suspend the hospital's operations until further notice and asked the authorities to appear before it within 15 working days with the necessary documents.

Advance Health Aid Diagnostic Centre is located beside the Authentic Hospital.

The team found no pathologist or radiologist present at the facility, which was crowded with patients.

Family members of Md Hanif, 72, who suffered a brain stroke and was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, brought him to the diagnostic centre.

He had been waiting in a wheelchair for more than an hour, but the authorities said the specialist who would perform the echocardiogram would arrive after 2:30pm.

"A man from Dhaka Medical College Hospital took us here, saying the facility was good and tests could be done quickly. But we have been waiting for a long time with this critical patient," said Hanif's son-in-law Md Ripon.

The team also found that the facility was using a reagent that expired in February. Several test reports lacked the signature of the assigned doctor.

In this context, the mobile court fined the facility Tk 1 lakh, while DGHS decided to shut it down until further notice.

The team also shut down Ahmed Specialised Hospital until further notice for not having an emergency department, employing a foreign doctor without permission, maintaining unhygienic conditions and posing serious safety risks by keeping oxygen cylinders and a generator in the same room.

The team also decided to close Active Blood Bank, Transfusion and Diagnostic Centre, Pure Scientific Diagnostic Centre and Dhaka Diagnostic and Consultation Centre until further notice after detecting similar irregularities in the facilities.

Creative Blood Bank was issued a show notice for operating without valid licence.

Ruhul Quddus made new attorney general

FROM PAGE 12
from Jhenaidah-1. He is now the law minister after his party's victory.

Ruhul is also a member of the BNP's National Executive Committee.

After his appointment, he told reporters at his Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) chamber that he would discharge his new duties "in accordance with the law, ethics and principles".

He stressed the need for a comprehensive government policy to reduce case backlogs, citing shortages of judges and systemic inefficiencies. "Often a criminal case is filed against 10 to 50 persons though the offence was committed by only one. In civil matters, disputes that could be settled outside court are brought into litigation, adding to the backlog," he said.

He added that training for lawyers and greater awareness among litigants were essential to easing the burden on the judiciary.

Ruhul currently serves on the Bangladesh Bar Council and previously held the post of secretary of the SCBA. A former student of Dhaka University's Law Department, he became a member of the SCBA in 1996.

Oil prices

FROM PAGE 12
when necessary".

In stock markets trading, European indices jumped around 1.5 percent approaching the half-way stage yesterday.

Asian markets earlier closed with strong gains, led by Tokyo which won nearly three percent.

"European markets are following the wider global theme of optimism as rumours swirl around the apparent negotiations that could lead us out of the conflict in Iran," said Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets.

"Dip buyers have started to grab what they can, while oil prices shift lower as the perceived length of time associated with the disruption shortens."

European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde said the ECB has several options for dealing with the energy shock, vowing policymakers would not be "paralysed by hesitation".

At its most recent meeting last week, the ECB kept interest rates on hold, while warning of higher inflation and lower growth in the eurozone owing to the war.

However, analysts have raised bets on the central bank hiking borrowing costs as soon as next month to try and keep the lid on an expected surge in consumer prices.

Hopes of an end to the Middle East conflict surfaced after the New York Times quoted unnamed officials saying that Washington had sent a 15-point peace proposal via Pakistan.

Israel's Channel 12 said that Trump was suggesting a one-month ceasefire during which they would discuss handing over Iran's enriched uranium and banning further enrichment.

The Israeli report added that Tehran would ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz, while Iran would see an end to all sanctions and receive assistance in developing civil nuclear energy.

The strait, through which one fifth of global oil and gas normally flows, has largely been blockaded by Iran.

Domestic airfare

FROM PAGE 12
(Rita) at her office in the Secretariat yesterday.

There is no necessity to increase the jet fuel price at present.

"We have also informed the minister that increasing the jet fuel price will badly impact the country's aviation industry -- we may even have to suspend the operations."

The Philippine government has decreased the rate of different kinds of aeronautical and non-aeronautical charges by 50 to 60 percent to support their local airline industry, according to Molifur.

"Our government, in contrast, didn't take any such measures."

The civil aviation minister noted down AOAB's points and assured that she will place their concern before the concerned ministries and department, he added.

No hike in fuel prices for now

FROM PAGE 12
normally maintains a 15-day reserve and currently has about a month's supply of fuel.

He assured that the government is taking steps to ensure stability amid the ongoing international energy crisis.

Asked about the PM's response in this regard, he said, "The prime minister reviewed all available government resources, assessed progress, and examined the steps taken by the ministries. I can briefly say that the reserves are sufficient."

About panic buying, Ghani said, "Excess fuel purchased unnecessarily could go to waste. The situation should normalise in a few days once public confidence returns. Under the government's plan, the reserves are being increased further."

Regarding the jet fuel price hike, he explained,

"The international price of jet fuel has increased. Airlines operating here also follow the international rate, so the price movement is aligned with global trends."

He confirmed that the one-month reserve includes all types of fuel and added that the Cabinet Committee on Purchase has approved the acquisition of two cargoes of LNG.

Ghani also said that fuel not immediately available under contracts is purchased from the spot market, and decisions have to be made quickly -- often within 10 hours of the cargo's arrival.

FIVE ISSUES DISCUSSED
The cabinet secretary said five issues were discussed at the meeting.

As it began, members recalled the "black night" of March 25, when occupation Pakistani forces carried

out genocide, which led to the declaration of independence and the start of the Liberation War, reports BSS.

Prayers were also offered for the martyrs of the Liberation War.

Ghani told reporters that five agendas were discussed at the meeting as part of constitutional obligations.

He said the first was the draft amendment to the Value Added Tax (VAT) and Supplementary Duty Act-2026, which received approval in principle and final approval, and that drafts of two finance-related laws, reflecting expenditures of the fiscal year ending in July along with revised final expenditures, also received approval in principle.

Another item was the draft amendment to a financial ordinance, which also received approval in principle and final, he

added.

"This ordinance is part of the annual financial framework for the 2025-26 fiscal year under articles 86 and 27 of the constitution, and revenue has been collected under it since June 26, 2025."

Ghani explained that taxes are collected under specific laws, and to convert the ordinance into an act, the draft Finance (Amendment) Act for the 2025-26 fiscal year was given final approval at a special cabinet meeting, subject to vetting by the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division.

He said among the 133 ordinances issued during the previous cabinet's tenure, a decision has been made to convert five of them into acts. "Necessary procedures will be followed, and these will be presented in parliament soon."

Kim vows N Korea's 'unshakable' support for Russia

AFP, Seoul

North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un said his country will always support Russia, and complimented his counterpart in a letter published by state media yesterday.

Ties between the two countries have grown closer since Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, with Pyongyang dispatching ground troops and weapons systems to aid Russia's war effort.

Analysts say the assistance has been provided in exchange for Russia's provision of food and weapons technology.

"I express my sincere thanks to you for sending warm and sincere congratulations first on my reassignment of the heavy duty as President of the State Affairs," Kim said in the message on Tuesday, the official Korean Central News Agency said.

North Korea's rubber-stamp legislature reappointed Kim this week as head of the authoritarian nation's highest policymaking and governing body.

"Today, the DPRK and Russia are closely cooperating to defend the sovereignty of the two countries," Kim said, using the initials of the North's official name.



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01.	Tender ID :1242935 Package No: JGTDSL.IT.PG-01 Date Of Publishing : 25-Mar-2026, 16.45	Supply, Installation, Testing & Commission of Automatic Flap Barrier System including Attendance, Visitor Control and Leave Management with all Ancillary works at JGTDSL Head Office, Sylhet, 17 (Seventeen) Nos. JGTDSL Regional Distribution Offices (Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Habiganj District), 01 (One) No. Dhaka Liaison Office & 6 Nos. of important locations of JGTDSL (CMS, RMS, etc.)	Last Selling Date & Time: 08-Apr-2026, 17.00 Closing Date & Time: 09-Apr-2026, 15.00 Opening Date & Time: 09-Apr-2026, 15.00

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Bangladesh face stern Vietnam test ahead of Singapore tie

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will look to build confidence from facing a ‘strong’ Vietnam side in a FIFA international friendly today, ahead of their Singapore tie, head coach Javier Cabrera said during a pre-match press conference in Hanoi on Wednesday.

The match will kick off at 6:00pm Bangladesh time.

The men in red and green face a formidable challenge against Vietnam, who are ranked 103rd in the world – 78 places above Bangladesh – in what will be their first international fixture of the year.

Having largely competed against South Asian opponents and lower-ranked Southeast Asian sides in recent years, Bangladesh will finally test themselves against one of the region’s most competitive outfits.

“Our main objective is to prepare for the upcoming official match against Singapore,” Cabrera said during the pre-match press conference in Hanoi on Wednesday. “Facing Vietnam is very important for us, as they are one of the strongest teams in Southeast Asia. Playing against them will help build our confidence.”

Vietnam are the reigning Southeast Asian champions, having won the title three times. While Bangladesh have played several matches against sides like Laos



PHOTO: BFF

and Cambodia in recent times – often with positive results – and also faced other Southeast Asian teams with mixed outcomes, today’s match will be only the third meeting between Bangladesh and

Vietnam. The two sides previously met during the 2002 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers in Dammam in 2001, where Bangladesh held Vietnam to a goalless draw in the first

encounter before suffering a 4-0 defeat a few days later.

Cabrera also acknowledged the strength of the hosts’ current squad, which includes naturalised players like Xuan Son and Hoang Hen.

Bangladesh captain Jamal Bhuyan, meanwhile, struck a more optimistic tone about the prospect of a competitive match.

“It will be a difficult match, but Bangladesh are improving. We believe we have the ability to compete with Vietnam,” Jamal said.

Vietnam head coach Kim Sang Sik said their target is victory, although he acknowledged Bangladesh’s recent progress.

“Bangladesh have changed a lot compared to last year, from the coaching staff to the squad, especially with the addition of players competing abroad... I believe their current squad is much stronger than before,” he said, adding that his team is “analysing videos of Hamza Choudhury to find ways to deal with his strengths.”

The arrival of Hamza on Tuesday has boosted Bangladesh’s squad, but Cabrera remained cautious about his immediate involvement.

“Hamza only arrived yesterday afternoon. He is doing well, but needs time to adjust to the weather and time zone. We will assess and consider his availability for the match,” the Spaniard said.

Bangladesh’s compound men’s archery team secured a place in the final of the 2026 Asia Cup World Ranking Tournament (Stage 1) after strong performances in the elimination rounds yesterday. Nawaz Ahmed Rakib, Himu Bachhar and Aishwarzo Rahman edged past Malaysia in the quarterfinal with a 231-231 draw before winning the shoot-off 30-27, and then defeated Bhutan 232-228 in the semifinals. They will face Vietnam in the gold medal match on March 27.

PHOTO: BAF



Six in PSL signals shifting tide

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

For years, all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan and pacer Mustafizur Rahman were Bangladesh’s only regulars in franchise-based T20 leagues around the world before leg-spinner Rishad Hossain joined their ranks with recent appearances in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) and Big Bash League (BBL).

Despite that slight progress, opportunities for other Bangladeshi players remained limited, largely due to inconsistent performances and, at times, a lack of confidence stemming from earlier underwhelming stints by compatriots.

However, this year’s PSL marks a significant shift.

The tournament, which begins today at Lahore’s Gaddafi Stadium, will feature six Bangladeshi players – the highest number from the country in a single overseas franchise league.

Mustafizur and Parvez Hossain Emon will represent Lahore Qalandars, while Shoriful Islam, Nahid Rana and Tanzid Hasan Tamim will play for Peshawar Zalmi. Rishad, meanwhile, is set to represent Rawalpindi Pindiz.

All players have already joined their respective squads after receiving partial NOCs and government clearance.

For Tanzid and Emon, the PSL will mark their first experience in overseas franchise cricket. Shoriful has previously featured in the Lanka Premier League (LPL) and several T10 competitions, while Nahid was part of a previous PSL edition but did not get a game.

Bangladesh Cricket Board’s (BCB’s)



cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim believes such exposure will play a vital role in their development as players.

“Playing at home in familiar conditions is very different from performing in an unfamiliar environment with a new team, new crowd and added pressure. This is where professionalism and accountability truly come into play – something we cannot fully replicate in domestic cricket,” Fahim told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

“While experienced players like Mustafizur know what to expect, for others this is a huge learning opportunity. Those who succeed will gain confidence,

and the national team will benefit from that growth,” he added.

Fahim also noted that improved performances could open more doors for Bangladeshi cricketers in global leagues.

“There might have been questions about how much trust there was in our players before, but that area seems to be improving as they become more reliable to others... If we look at Sri Lanka or Afghanistan, playing in foreign franchises is a major source of their strength. We haven’t been able to utilise this area until now, but with six players going this time, I hope more will go next year.”

Former national cricketer and coach Hannan Sarkar credited recent improvements in domestic conditions as a reason behind this surge in numbers.

“A positive factor is that the BPL has been played on better wickets for the last two years. This has helped our bowlers develop and our batters grow their shot-making abilities. Franchise teams show interest because they observe who performs well in our domestic franchise leagues.”

Previously, Mashrafe bin Mortaza, Mohammad Ashraful and Litton Das had featured in the Indian Premier League (IPL), while Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudullah, Mushfiqur Rahim, Sabbir Rahman and Anamul Haque had stints in the PSL, though few managed to secure long-term success.

With a new generation now getting opportunities, Bangladesh’s cricket fraternity will hope these players will seize the moment.

SHORT CORNER

Salah’s Liverpool goodbye signals end of glorious era

Mohamed Salah’s long goodbye from Liverpool signals the end of a glorious era and leaves the Premier League giants facing another expensive rebuild. The Egyptian superstar announced on Tuesday that he would be leaving Anfield at the end of the season after a glittering nine-year spell at the club. An emotional Salah, 33, expressed his love for Liverpool, where he stands alongside the all-time greats. He has won two Premier League titles along with a Champions League and other silverware and piled up a remarkable number of personal awards.

BCB selectors get zonal duty

The newly formed four-member national selection panel has been assigned zonal responsibilities alongside their regular duties, informed Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim. BCB on Monday announced the panel, headed by Habibul Bashar, with its tenure running until the selection of Bangladesh’s squad for the ICC World Cup 2027, scheduled to be held in Africa in October-November. “The major change in this selection panel is that while the four selectors will pick the national team, ‘A’ team and High Performance (HP) squad, each of them will also be responsible for a specific region,” Fahim told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

****Read full stories on The Daily Star’s website**

Frustration mounts as DPL stalls

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh T20I team all-rounder Shamim Hossain was batting to throwdowns yesterday evening at Mirpur’s Academy Ground, seemingly going through his motions.

Usually at this time of the year, the players are busy with the List A competition Dhaka Premier League (DPL). But as the leagues remains in limbo due to the standoff between the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the clubs, Shamim’s lone presence in Mirpur was symbolic of the dearth of cricket at the very home of the country’s cricket.

Social media posts from several cricketers over the past few days shows that the pangs of lack of DPL is starting to hit.

Moin Khan, a domestic cricketer, had posted that in the previous years, after Eid vacations, they would be playing in the Super League stage of DPL, but this time they don’t even know when the league would begin.



Shamim shared his frustrations. “Actually, the situation right now is quite funny. The DPL is not taking place in a country like ours... it looks odd,” Shamim told members of the media, adding how not staging the country’s premier List A competition on the year before the World Cup could have an adverse effect.

“We would also be playing the ODI World Cup in 2027, right? If we don’t prepare from now on, what will we do when the tournament comes?”

“For those outside the national team, it’s harmful from a financial point of view. It’s not good for Bangladeshi cricketers. So, I believe it’s important to revive the league as soon as possible,” Shamim said.

For Shamim, who is trying to carve a path back into the ODI setup, the DPL would have provided a chance to return in the discussions.

Last season, he scored 396 runs in nine innings, averaging over 56 at a strike rate of 126.11. His performances had reopened the national team door for him.

With World Cup coming and the DPL still uncertain, Shamim now hopes that

the three-match T20I series against New Zealand at home next month would help him get a foot in the door in the ODI setup.

“If the DPL had taken place, it would have been a good opportunity to make a comeback. Since there are less chances of matches taking place, there is nothing to gain from thinking over it. Since the T20I series [against New Zealand] is ahead of us, my focus will be on doing well there to get back to the ODI side,” Shamim said.

Despite his frustrations, Shamim was keen on finding new avenues in his batting yesterday during his first net session after the vacation. Known for improvised shots, Shamim appeared to be curbing his tendencies for safer options.

“Just preparing myself for the games ahead. Slowly getting ready. Since the camp is coming up, I’m preparing myself for that,” he said, referring to the national team’s camp which is set to begin on Friday ahead of next month’s white-ball home series against New Zealand.

Ideally, players, whether one is part of the national team or not, would be working on batting templates in actual match scenarios in the DPL. This time, it is up to the individuals to prepare themselves. And as long as the stalemate between BCB and the clubs continues, Bangladesh cricket and its cricketers will continue to suffer.

AZZURRI ON EDGE

AGENCIES

For Italy, the route to the FIFA World Cup 2026 remains tense despite its expansion to 48 teams. Even with Europe allotted 16 places, the four-time champions must navigate the play-offs – one of 16 teams competing for the final four spots – underlining their recent decline.

Since lifting the trophy in 2006, the Azzurri have endured two group-stage exits and missed the last two editions. Now under Gennaro Gattuso, the task is clear: avoid a third consecutive absence.

Italy host Northern Ireland in Bergamo in tonight’s semifinal, with Wales or Bosnia and Herzegovina awaiting in the final.

“We can’t stress the lads, they’re well aware of what the stakes are. There will obviously be some tension, but we have to make sure we transmit positivity,” Gattuso said.

Poor performances by Italian clubs in this season’s Champions League have deepened a sense of decline, with another failure to qualify for the finals in the USA, Canada and Mexico widely viewed as a potential death knell.

“Failing to qualify for the World Cup would be an enormous blow, above all on an economic level,” said former Italy defender and 2006 winner Massimo Oddo.





No hike in fuel prices for now

Govt says reserves sufficient, warns against hoarding

STAR REPORT

The government yesterday said it has no plans to raise fuel prices at this moment and assured the public that the country has an adequate supply for a month, while efforts are underway to further strengthen reserves.

Amid global uncertainties linked to the US-Israel war on Iran, the authorities have urged people not to give in to panic buying and warned against hoarding.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapan and Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Ghani announced the government's plans following a special meeting to address the fuel situation. Prime Minister Tarique Rahman chaired the meeting at the Cabinet Division.

At a post-meeting press briefing, Swapan told reporters that despite the global situation, the government had taken no decision to increase fuel prices, reports UNB.

He said a cabinet committee, led by the finance minister, was managing the situation efficiently. "At this moment, there is no fuel crisis and we hope to avoid any."

Prime Minister's Adviser (Policy and Strategy) Zahed Ur Rahman, who was also present at the briefing, warned against hoarding, saying it would not be beneficial as fuel prices are not increasing.

"The prime minister has clearly stated that fuel prices will not go up. So those involved in hoarding fuel will not benefit," he said, adding that the government is monitoring any such activities at the fuel pump level.

Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Ghani said the country

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5



A farmer tries to siphon water from a pond to his Boro paddy field in Dumuria upazila of Khulna yesterday as growers face a mounting crisis of irrigation due to a shortage of fuel to run pumps amid the US-Israel war on Iran.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

'Freedom fighters gave us a map, a dignified flag'

Shafiqur says changes only outward despite '71 sacrifices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite the sacrifices made in the 1971 Liberation War, Bangladesh has only changed outwardly but not from within, opposition leader and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman said yesterday.

Expressing "deep gratitude from the innermost depths of the heart" to the freedom fighters, he said they had given the nation "an independent map and a dignified flag".

"With this flag and map in hand, Bangladesh was supposed to change. But in reality, only external change has happened; the inner change has not," he said as the chief guest at a discussion marking Independence Day. It was organised by Dhaka South

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5



Ruhul Quddus made new attorney general

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior Supreme Court lawyer Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal has been appointed the 18th attorney general of Bangladesh.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin made the appointment under Article 64(l) of the constitution, according to a gazette notification issued by the law ministry yesterday. The provision empowers the president to appoint as attorney general any person qualified to be a judge of the Supreme Court.

The Attorney General's Office provides legal advice to the government and handles its legal matters.

Additional Attorney General Md Arshadur Rouf had been serving as acting attorney general since January 1 this year, following the resignation of Md Asaduzzaman on December 27 last year.

Asaduzzaman stepped down to contest the February 12 national election as a BNP candidate

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

DGHS drive opens can of worms

Shuts down 7 more facilities, slaps fines on 2

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

A 50-bed hospital is operating with only one duty doctor, with no emergency department. Its licence expired in June 2025.

Another facility, approved as a diagnostic centre to conduct only basic tests, has been providing services beyond its jurisdiction. It has also been running a blood bank without approval for the past year.

At a separate diagnostic centre, inspectors found expired reagents being used for tests. Test reports lacked the signature of a designated physician, and no patient records were maintained.

These facilities relied on paid brokers to bring in patients from Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Patients, many from low-income backgrounds, were reportedly compelled to use substandard services in exchange for money.

The irregularities came to light during a drive conducted by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), in association with the Dhaka District Administration, yesterday targeting errant private hospitals, diagnostic centres and blood banks in the Chankharpool area.

As similar irregularities were reported at four other facilities on the second day of drives, the authorities shut down two hospitals, four diagnostic centres and one blood bank. Two of the facilities were also fined by a mobile court.

The drive was launched after the health administration on Monday sealed Doctor's Care Hospital and Diagnostic Centre in the capital's Shyamoli over various irregularities.

DGHS Director (Hospital) Abu Hussain Md. Moinul Ahsan, who led the drive, said they would continue the drive against the rogue facilities.

The health ministry yesterday directed divisional and district-level health administrators to launch countrywide drives against errant private hospitals, diagnostic centres and blood banks in a

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Brokers coerced the family of stroke patient Hanif, 72, to take him to Advanced Health Aid Diagnostic Centre from DMCH yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

JET FUEL PRICE HIKE Domestic airfare to go up by at least Tk 1,000

RASHIDUL HASAN

Air tickets on domestic routes will cost Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,050 more following an 80 percent hike in jet fuel prices at the consumer level, according to the Aviation Operators Association of Bangladesh (AOAB).

Under the revised structure, the price of jet fuel for domestic flights has been set at Tk 202.29 per litre, up from Tk 112.41.

Meanwhile, jet fuel for international flights will cost \$1.3216 (Tk 162.21) per litre, up from the current \$0.738 (Tk 90.58).

For domestic flights, air operators will have to pay Tk 1,200 as duties and value-added tax, up from Tk 150, said Mofizur Rahman, secretary general of AOAB.

After adjusting the surcharge and tax, an air passenger will have to pay a minimum of Tk 5,849 for one-way travel to Sylhet, up from Tk 4,799 previously.

Of the minimum fare of Tk 5,849, airlines will have to furnish about Tk 1,754 to the state coffer, said Mofizur, also the managing director of Novair.

Kamrul Islam, general manager (public relations) of US-Bangla Airlines, said they had no option but to update the surcharge rate after the unprecedented move by the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission.

"The government's decision is illogical," Mofizur told The Daily Star after his meeting with Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Afroza Khanam

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

Oil prices tumble, stocks rally on peace hopes

AFP, London

Oil prices tumbled and stock markets rallied yesterday on reports that the United States had sent a peace plan to Iran.

After nearly four weeks of conflict, investors jumped on signs that hostilities could be winding down, with the safe-haven dollar losing support.

However, analysts pointed out that the arrival of more US troops in the Middle East and fresh missile strikes exchanged between Iran and Israel suggested chances of escalation remained.

"Oil prices have moved lower... offering some relief to equities that had been weighed down by worries over inflation," noted Matt Britzman, senior equity analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.

"It's still a highly fluid situation. Trying to call how the rest of the week plays out would be unwise."

The economic impact of the crisis has begun to bite around the world, with governments looking to cut energy consumption.

Helping to ease the situation, Tehran announced it will let "non-hostile" oil vessels through the crucial Strait of Hormuz.



Crude futures plunged more than six percent yesterday -- with Brent back below \$100 -- after US President Donald Trump voiced optimism at ending the war and said officials were "in negotiations right now".

The head of the International Energy Agency, Fatih Birol, meanwhile said he was "ready to move forward" with an additional release of oil reserves "if and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

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