

"The Gaza model must not be replicated in Lebanon. Across the region, and far beyond, civilians are enduring serious harm and living under profound insecurity."  
UN chief Antonio Guterres

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# 3-day weekend worsens supply to pumps

Banks, logistics services remained closed for several days, disrupting payments and delaying deliveries

ASIFUR RAHMAN and MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Fuel supply shortfall shows little sign of easing, as global uncertainty, disruptions during the extended Eid holidays and weekend, and high domestic demand continue to pressure the energy chain.

Amid the US-Israel war on Iran, concerns are mounting over shipments, particularly for April, with only a limited number of planned consignments having been confirmed.

Officials said the war has already disrupted procurement, with suppliers delaying shipments or invoking force majeure.

Six of the 17 shipments planned for March remain unconfirmed.

Extended Eid holidays worsened the situation, as banks and logistics services remained closed for several days, disrupting payments and delaying deliveries. Pump owners said they struggled to place orders or secure supplies.

- ➔ Shipments of 2 lakh tonnes of crude from KSA, UAE facing delays, cost overruns
- ➔ Crude oil shipment from Abu Dhabi National Oil Company cancelled
- ➔ Crude shipment of 1 lakh tonnes from KSA delayed, cost increased
- ➔ A vessel with 10,000 tonnes of diesel, 20,000 tonnes of jet fuel reached

"There is no major improvement. The situation is more or less the same as before," said Mohammad Nazmul Haque, president of Bangladesh Petroleum Dealers, Distributors, Agents and Petrol Pump Owners Association.

"You can manage one or two days, but a five-day banking gap cannot be covered. That is where the problem started during Eid," he added.

After the resumption of work on Tuesday following the Eid holidays, offices were closed yesterday on Independence Day. Today and tomorrow are weekly holidays.

Nazmul said operators are limiting sales to Tk 2,000 for cars and Tk 500 for motorcycles to manage demand.

"We are trying to avoid panic with whatever fuel we have," he said, noting long queues and pressure from anxious customers.

"People are anxious. Many are trying to take fuel even when they do not need it immediately, fearing shortages or price hikes. This is adding to the pressure on the system," he added.

Despite official assurances of adequate stock, long lines were seen at filling stations in Tejgaon, Mohakhali, and Bijoy Sarani.

Ride sharing drivers and others reported waiting hours to refuel, often leaving empty-handed.

## THE SITUATION

The government plans to import 14 shipments by sea and three via pipeline in April, including 25,000 tonnes of octane, 1,00,000 tonnes of crude, and 3.03 lakh tonnes of diesel. But only 1.1 lakh tonnes of diesel have been confirmed so far.

Bangladesh has not received any crude this month, as shipments have been cancelled or delayed.

Two shipments totalling 2,00,000 tonnes of crude from Saudi

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## FLAG OF FREEDOM

A young girl waves the national flag, her hand holding a history written in blood and sacrifice, and the promise of a future she will inherit, at the National Martyrs' Memorial in Savar on Independence Day yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Bangladeshi ships may use the Strait of Hormuz

Say media reports citing Iranian foreign minister

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh has been named among several "friendly nations" whose vessels may be allowed safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz, according to international media reports.

Iran has indicated that ships linked to a number of countries, including Bangladesh, can still transit the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz under coordinated arrangements.

The narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, through which a fifth of the world's oil is normally shipped, has been under an Iranian chokehold since the United States and Israel launched a war against Iran last month.

Talking to Iranian state TV, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi clarified that the Strait, contrary to the Western media claims, is not completely closed, reports The Indian Express yesterday.

"Many of the shipowners, or the countries that own these vessels, have contacted us and requested that we ensure their safe passage through the strait. For some of these countries that

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## US will be Iran's 'worst nightmare'

Trump warns Tehran if it doesn't agree to 15-point proposal; Iran sees plan as 'unfair'; its navy chief killed

AGENCIES

A US proposal for ending nearly four weeks of fighting is "one-sided and unfair", a senior Iranian official told Reuters yesterday, while US President Donald Trump said Iran must make a deal or face a continued onslaught.

The Iranian official said the proposal, conveyed to Tehran by Pakistan, "was reviewed in detail on Wednesday night by senior Iranian officials and the representative of Iran's supreme leader".

It lacked the minimum requirements for success and served only US and Israeli interests, the official said, while stressing that diplomacy had not ended despite the lack for now of a realistic plan for peace talks.

Trump described the Iranians as "great negotiators" but added that he was not sure he was "willing to make a deal with them to end the war".

Iran has launched strikes against Israel, US bases and Gulf states as well as effectively blocking Middle East fuel exports via the Strait of Hormuz since the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28.

"They now have the chance, that is Iran, to permanently abandon their nuclear ambitions and to join a new path forward," Trump said during a Cabinet meeting at the White House.

"We'll see if they want to do it. If they don't, we're their worst

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Alireza Tangsiri

## INDEPENDENCE DAY Nation pays solemn tribute to war heroes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nation yesterday observed 55 years of independence and the National Day in a befitting manner, as people from all walks of life streamed to the National Martyrs' Memorial in Savar and other war memorials across the country to honour those who laid down their lives for liberation.

Many arrived with their children, while students from various educational institutions, carrying banners, festoons, and floral wreaths gathered at the National Memorial.

The premises echoed with patriotic songs and processions, reflecting a deep sense of pride and remembrance.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman also paid tributes to the martyrs of the 1971 Liberation War by placing wreaths at the memorial at 6:00am.



They then stood in solemn silence as a mark of respect and also signed the visitors' book on the premises.

Chief Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury, cabinet members, chiefs of the three services, senior BNP leaders, war-wounded freedom fighters, family members of the martyrs, foreign diplomats, political leaders, and high civil and military officials were present.

Flanked by cabinet members and BNP Standing Committee members, Tarique, also chairman of the ruling BNP, placed two additional wreaths on behalf of the cabinet and his party.

He later exchanged pleasantries with freedom fighters, family members of the martyrs, and other guests present.

Later, Deputy Speaker Barrister Kayser Kamal, on behalf of Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, paid homage at the memorial.

Opposition leader and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman also placed wreaths and offered prayers for the martyrs, seeking peace and prosperity for the country.

The prime minister, accompanied by his daughter, then reviewed the Independence Day and National Day parade held at the National Parade Ground.

They arrived at the parade ground

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## A life cut short, a campus in grief

JU mourns 25-year-old Rayan killed in bus plunge

SAKIB AHMED and SUZIT KUMAR DAS

In classrooms, the debating club, the cultural space and friend circles, Rayan was a beloved student and peer across the Jahangirnagar University campus.



His vibrant presence, amicable behaviour and organisational skills had won the hearts of many.

But all that has now become a distant memory, as Ahnaf Tahmid Khan Rayan, 25, a student of the economics department, was among those who lost their lives after a bus plunged into the Padma before boarding a ferry at Rajbari's Daulatdia on Wednesday.

His mother, Rehana Akter, and his young nephew, Tajbid Bin Mosabbir, were also killed in the accident, while his elder sister is undergoing treatment at a hospital.

Mourning the loss, Prapti Taposhi, a former JU student, wrote, "My Rayan is no more. A piece of my heart is gone. He has turned my whole world upside down and left me guilty for the rest of my life."

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Relatives mourn yesterday after at least 26 passengers died when a bus plunged into the Padma River at the Daulatdia Ferry Terminal in Goalanda, Rajbari, the day before.

PHOTO: AFP

## PADMA BUS TRAGEDY 26 bodies recovered

5-member probe body formed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

At least 26 bodies have so far been recovered following a bus plunge into the Padma river while boarding a ferry at Daulatdia in Rajbari district on Wednesday.

The rescue operation is still ongoing, said Dewan Sohel Rana, deputy director of Rajbari Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Eight men, seven children and 11 women have died. Of them, 22 bodies have already been handed over to their families, he said.

Recovery operations were carried out by four units, including 10 divers, with support from the army, police, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), Coast Guard and local administration, according to the fire service.

So far, the identities of 24 victims have been confirmed.

They are Rehana Akhter, 61; Marzina Khatun, 56; Rajib Biswas, 28; Zahura Anti, 27; Kazi Saif, 30; Marzina Akhter, 32; Israfil, 3; Safia Akhter Rintih, 12; Faiz Shahanur, 11; Tajbid, 7; Arman Khan, 31; Najmira Jesmin, 30; Lima Akhter, 26; Jochna, 35; Mukta Khanam, 38; Nasima, 40; Ayesha Akhter Suma, 30; Soha Akhter, 11; Ayesha Siddika, 13; Arman, 7 months; Abdur Rahman, 6; Sabit Hasan, 8; Ahnaf Tahmid Khan, 25; and Ujjal Sheikh, 40.

The district administration is providing Tk 25,000 to each bereaved family and Tk 15,000 to each of the injured to meet their immediate needs, said Md Hafizur Rahman, Rajbari's assistant commissioner and executive magistrate.

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## Bangladeshis with expired visas asked to leave KSA

Embassy urges departure by April 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshis in Saudi Arabia whose visit, Umrah or final exit visas expired on February 25 but have not left the kingdom nation yet have been asked to depart by April 18.

The Saudi authorities have provided this window without requiring visa extensions or imposing fines, according to an advisory issued yesterday by the Bangladesh embassy in Riyadh on its Facebook page.

The visitors can leave on any day before April 18 by booking a ticket and going directly to the airport.

The embassy also cautioned that those who fail to leave within the deadline may face legal complications.

Following the outbreak of war in the Middle East on February 28, flights have been disrupted, leaving many Bangladeshi nationals stranded or overstaying their visas.

Two Bangladeshi nationals have died so far from Iranian missile strikes.



First aid responders at the site of an Israeli airstrike on the southern Lebanese village of Kfar Roummane yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Liberation War was not fought to establish a religion-based state: Tuku

BSS, Sirajganj

Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister and freedom fighter Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku yesterday said the Liberation War was not fought to establish a religion-based state.

"Bangladesh was not created through any conspiracy of any country. It was born to ensure people's rights and to build a progressive state. The Liberation War was not fought to establish a religion-based state."

The minister was addressing a reception accorded to freedom fighters, organised by Sirajganj district administration, marking Independence and National Day 2026 at the local Shilpakala Academy auditorium at 11:00am.

He said the Liberation War was a people's war. Referring to the events of March 25, 1971, he said the Pakistani forces carried out brutal killings that night, adding that people seeking freedom continued the struggle during the war.

Tuku also said freedom fighters had joined the war to protect the country, its soil and sovereignty, not for personal gains.

"But over the past years, the spirit of the War of Liberation has been misused as a tool to cling to power and for corruption."

Addressing the freedom fighters, he urged them to remain vigilant, saying the country was not liberated to establish a religion-based state, and warned that anti-

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## 3-day weekend worsens supply to pumps

FROM PAGE 1

Arabia and the UAE have been deferred to mid-April due to shipping route disruptions, contract complications, and rising freight costs.

A deal with Abu Dhabi National Oil Company was also cancelled.

At least 1,00,000 tonnes of crude oil were supposed to be loaded into a tanker at Ras Tanura in Saudi Arabia. This shipment for Bangladesh is now being loaded at Yanbu, with an additional cost of \$0.25 per barrel.

Eastern Refinery Ltd (ERL), the country's lone refinery, is operating at reduced capacity.

Stocks are expected to last about two weeks, with daily refining cut to 3,500-4,000 tonnes against a capacity of 5,000 tonnes. The reduction in refining is aimed at conserving the stock.

Md Shihabul Islam, manager (purchase) of ERL, said the facility is configured to process crude from Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi, limiting alternative sourcing.

A vessel carrying 10,000 tonnes of diesel and 20,000 tonnes of jet fuel arrived yesterday under a contract with China's Unipac, offering temporary relief.

Octane has emerged as the most

vulnerable product, with stock estimated to last only a week. Local condensate -- a byproduct of gas -- has become the main source.

The 25,000 tonnes of octane imports planned for April also



Queue for fuel reaches BAF Shaheen College yesterday, 1.2km from Trust Filling Station at Bijoy Sarani in the capital.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

remain unconfirmed, according to BPC sources.

Although overall stock is considered "adequate" on paper, except for octane, the situation may worsen, particularly without smooth banking and logistics operations,

if shipment delays continue and disruptions persist, said a BPC official, requesting anonymity.

In a bid to ease the pressure, the government yesterday approved urgent diesel imports.



Queue for fuel reaches BAF Shaheen College yesterday, 1.2km from Trust Filling Station at Bijoy Sarani in the capital.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

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Although overall stock is considered "adequate" on paper, except for octane, the situation may worsen, particularly without smooth banking and logistics operations,

Under the approved deals, AP Energy Investments Limited will supply 1 lakh tonnes and Superstar International (Group) Limited 2 lakh tonnes through direct international purchase, according to a finance ministry statement.

## US will be Iran's 'worst nightmare'

FROM PAGE 1

nightmare. In the meantime, we'll just keep blowing them away."

Oil jumped to \$105 a barrel yesterday, and stock markets fell on renewed pessimism over ceasefire prospects as global plastics, technology, retail and tourism struggled with the impact.

**HORMUZ: A CRUCIAL ISSUE**

Trump suggested yesterday that Iran let 10 oil tankers transit the Strait of Hormuz as a goodwill gesture in negotiations, including some Pakistan-flagged vessels, elaborating on what he had described as a "present" from Iran.

The president, who is expected to send thousands of troops to the Middle East, driving expectations of a ground invasion, also said taking control of Iran's oil was an option but gave no further details.

A note seen by Reuters on Tuesday to the United Nations from Iran said "non-hostile vessels" could transit the strait if they coordinated with Iranian authorities.

A Thai oil tanker has passed through the strait following diplomatic coordination with Iran, and Malaysia said its vessels were also being allowed to transit in a sign that restrictions were loosening for some countries. Iran would be receptive to any request from Spain related to the strait, its embassy in Madrid said, in the first such offer to an EU state.

US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff confirmed that the US had sent a "15-point action list" as a basis for negotiations to end the war.

Pakistan's foreign minister said "indirect talks" between the US and Iran were taking place through messages relayed by Islamabad, with other states including Turkey and Egypt also supporting mediation efforts.

Any talks, were they to happen, would likely prove very difficult given the positions laid out by both sides.

According to sources and reports, the 15-point proposal includes demands ranging from dismantling Iran's nuclear programme and curbing its missiles to effectively handing over control of the strait.

Iran has hardened its stance since the war began, demanding guarantees against future military action,

compensation for losses, and formal control of the strait, Iranian sources say.

It also told intermediaries that Lebanon must be included in any ceasefire deal, regional sources said.

Trump has not identified who the US is negotiating with in Iran, with many high-ranking officials among the thousands of people killed in the war across the Middle East.

Israel removed Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf from its hit list after Pakistan urged Washington to press Israel not to target them, a Pakistani source with knowledge of the discussions told Reuters. An Israeli military spokesperson declined to comment.

A Western diplomat said the US had taken a "maximalist" position, and it was not clear if Washington was seeking to end the war or to calm markets before a potential ground operation.

**GROUND INVASION**

Iran's parliament speaker warned on Wednesday about the possible invasion of an Iranian island with the support of an unnamed regional country.

"Based on some intelligence reports, Iran's enemies are preparing to occupy one of the Iranian islands with support from one of the regional states," Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf wrote in an X post written in both Persian and Arabic.

"Our forces are monitoring all enemy movements, and if they take any step, all the vital infrastructure of that regional state will be targeted with relentless, unceasing attacks."

Meanwhile, Iran has been laying traps and moving additional military personnel and air defences to Kharg Island in recent weeks in preparation for a possible US operation to take control of the island, according to multiple people familiar with US intelligence reporting on the issue.

A dramatic military escalation will grow more likely if no progress is made in diplomatic talks and, in particular, if the Strait of Hormuz remains closed.

Some US officials think a crushing show of force to conclude the fighting would create more leverage in peace talks or simply give Trump something

to point to and declare victory.

The Pentagon is reportedly preparing to send several thousand troops from the army's 82nd Airborne Division to the Middle East, alongside Marine Expeditionary Units, to assist military operations in Iran.

Military experts said that the number of additional troops being deployed to the region appears to be consistent with plans for discrete and time-limited operations -- rather than a sustained ground campaign.

**WAVES OF MISSILES**

Gulf nations carried on fending off attacks as regional strikes continued.

The United Arab Emirates said it intercepted drones and missiles from Iran, assuring the public that "the sounds heard" are the country's air defences in action.

Kuwait issued a similar message, saying "any explosions that may be heard are the result of air defence systems intercepting hostile targets." It did not specify where the ongoing "missile and drone threats" were coming from.

Bahrain warned that sirens have been sounded and instructed its residents to take shelter in "the nearest safe place".

Iran also launched multiple waves of missiles at Israel, triggering air raid sirens in Tel Aviv and other areas and injuring at least five people.

In Iran, strikes hit a residential zone in the southern city of Bandar Abbas and a village on the outskirts of the southern city of Shiraz, where two teenage brothers were killed, Iran's Tasnim news agency said. A university building in Isfahan was reported to have been hit.

US and Israeli officials said Israel had killed Alireza Tangsiri, the Iranian navy chief overseeing what is a near-total blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, and that it had many more targets left as it degraded Iranian capabilities. Iran has not yet commented.

Still, Israel took Araqchi and Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf off its hit list after Pakistan urged Washington to press Israel not to target people who could be negotiating partners, a Pakistani source with knowledge of the discussion told Reuters. An Israeli military spokesperson declined to comment.

## Nation pays solemn tribute to war heroes

FROM PAGE 1

at 9:57am, escorted by a ceremonial motorcade of military police.

Liberation War Affairs Minister Ahmed Azam Khan, State Minister Ishraq Hossain, Defence Adviser Brigadier General (Retd) AKM Shamsul Islam, chiefs of the three services, the principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division, and the liberation war affairs secretary received Tarique.

He later joined other officials in receiving the president.

Then, President Shahabuddin, accompanied by Major General SM Asadul Haque, parade commander and General Officer Commanding of the 9th Infantry Division and Area Commander of Savar, inspected the parade from an open jeep and took the salute as the chief guest.

Contingents from Muktijuddha Sangsad, Bangladesh Army, Navy, Air Force, Bangladesh Police, Coast Guard, Ansar and Village Defence Party, Border Guard Bangladesh, Bangladesh National Cadet Corps, Bangladesh Jail, and combined female contingents participated in the parade.

Shahabuddin, Tarique and Zaima also witnessed flag-bearing skydives, armory displays by different regiments, spectacular fly-pasts, and aerobic performances.

Before departing, the president and PM exchanged pleasantries with the contingent commanders.

March 26 recalls the tragic events of March 25, 1971, which began a nine-month war culminating in the country's independence on December 16, 1971.

Prayers were also offered for martyred president Ziaur Rahman and former prime minister Khaleda Zia at their graves in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, as well as for the welfare of the country and the success of the present government under Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

Special prayers were offered seeking forgiveness for the martyrs of the 1971 Liberation War, the 1990 Anti-autocracy Movement, and the 2024 July Uprising.

After visiting the graves, IGRD and Cooperatives Minister and BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir expressed optimism that Bangladesh would become a democratic and prosperous country under Tarique Rahman's leadership.

Meanwhile, British King Charles III extended greetings to the president and people of Bangladesh, highlighting the enduring partnership between the two nations and the contribution of the Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK.

The United States and Russia also conveyed greetings. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the occasion marks a new chapter following the recent election and reaffirmed his country's commitment to strengthening economic and security

ties.

Russian Ambassador Alexander G Khozin said independence united the people of Bangladesh and marked the start of a national movement rooted in love for language and culture.

He highlighted Bangladesh's achievements in industrial growth and its global standing, adding that the Soviet Union recognised Bangladesh on January 25, 1972, and supported post-war recovery efforts, including mine-clearing operations in Chittagong.

He expressed hope for enhanced cooperation between Russia and Bangladesh under the new government.

The day was observed as a public holiday, with elaborate programmes nationwide. The president and the prime minister also issued separate messages marking the occasion.

Throughout the day, television and radio channels broadcast Liberation War programmes, while films were screened in cinema halls across districts.

Museums remained open to the public, government and private entertainment centres to children, while sports events, cultural programmes, special munazats and prayers at places of worship, and feasts at hospitals, prisons, children's homes, rehabilitation centres and welfare institutions were arranged nationwide.

## A life cut short

FROM PAGE 1

On campus, grief has taken many forms -- words, memories, and quiet disbelief.

"Rest in peace and strength. What more can I say? What helplessness defines our existence!" wrote Mridha Md Shiblee Noman, assistant professor and chairman of the journalism and media studies department.

For Riddha Anindya Ganguly, former general secretary of the university unit of the Chhatra Union, Rayan's social media now feels like a cruel archive.

"We will meet again, Rayan," he wrote. "Next time, we won't take a bus, we will board the Hogwarts Express, far away from this world, into some wizarding world."

Rayan was the former general secretary of the Jahangirnagar University Debate Organisation.

Citing the incident as a "structural killing," former JU professor Anu Muhammad argued that such tragedies are not mere accidents. "The reasons behind these repeated losses are known and solvable," he wrote on his social media profile.

JU Vice-Chancellor Prof Mohammad Kamrul Ahsan also expressed deep sorrow. In a

condolence message, he said the university had lost a promising student, and the loss to his family was irreparable.

Till filing the report last evening, at least 26 bodies were recovered following the accident. Among the deceased were 11 women, eight men and seven children.

Survivors are haunted by the trauma, while victims' families are reeling from shock and grief.

Md Rajib Sardar, a resident of Dadchi village in Rajbari Sadar, was returning to Dhaka for work after the Eid holidays. He boarded the bus from the Jamtala area in Goalanda.

Contacted by The Daily Star yesterday, he said, "I saw death from very close.... As the bus was sinking, a few people grabbed onto me. It felt like the end. I don't know how I managed to get out and float to the surface."

Md Nasir Uddin, a resident of Ashulia, lost his daughter Ayesha Akter Suma, 30, and seven-month-old grandson, Ayman. "My daughter and her child were coming from Jhenaidah's Shaikupa to my home. But she will never come home to me now."

Nasir Sheikh of the Belgachhi area

in Rajbari Sadar lost his pregnant sister-in-law Nazmira and six-year-old nephew Abdur Rahman.

"My nephew used to speak like a parrot. He used to stay close to me all the time. He has now been silenced forever," Nasir said with grief heavy in his voice.

## 26 bodies

FROM PAGE 1

At least 40 passengers were on board when the bus plunged into the Padma river.

Meanwhile, the district administration has formed a five-member committee to investigate the cause of the accident.

The panel is headed by Uchen Mey, additional district magistrate, and includes Rana; Md Shamsul Haque, additional superintendent of police (Crime and Operations); Mohammad Salah Uddin, assistant general manager of the BIWTC Daulatdia office; and Sathi Das, upazila nirbahi officer of Goalanda, who will serve as the member secretary.

The committee has been asked to submit its report to the deputy commissioner within three working days, according to the office order.

## Bangladeshi ships may use the Strait of Hormuz

FROM PAGE 1

we consider friendly, or in cases where we have decided to do so for other reasons, our armed forces have provided safe passage," Araghchi said while talking to Iranian state TV.

"You have seen on the news: China, Russia, Pakistan, Iraq, and India. Two of its ships passed through a few nights ago, and some other countries, and even Bangladesh, I believe. These are countries that spoke with us and coordinated with us, and this will continue in the future as well, even after the war," he added.

Contacted, a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star yesterday that Bangladesh has received no official communication from Iran in this regard.

The official, however, said Iran has issued no order since the war began that bars Bangladeshi ships from using the Strait of Hormuz.

"We are not an enemy country. So, there is no question of not allowing our ships," the official said.

He also said Bangladesh has not chartered any ship scheduled to pass through the Strait of Hormuz over

the next two months.

Bangladesh is importing fuel from various sources, and there should not be worries about the matter, the official said.

Meanwhile, Araghchi said that the countries that are involved in the ongoing war will not be allowed passage.

"We are in a state of war. The region is a war zone, and there is no reason to allow the ships of our enemies and their allies to pass through. But it remains open to others," he said.



## NATION HONOURS MARTYRS OF THE LIBERATION WAR

The nation marked its 56th Independence and National Day with solemn yet vibrant tributes to the Liberation War martyrs, as President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman placed wreaths at the National Memorial in Savar yesterday. Throughout the day, people from all walks of life -- including students and persons with disabilities -- along with political, social, and cultural organisations, arrived with flowers to honour the fallen. Leaders from various parties, including Jamaat-e-Islami and CPB, also paid their respects.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN, PID



## 274 killed on roads in 10-day Eid holidays

Says Road Safety Foundation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 274 people were killed and over 1,500 injured across the country during the 10-day Eid-ul-Fitr travel period, according to the Road Safety Foundation (RSF).

The casualties occurred in 342 road accidents between March 16 and 26, the RSF said.

In comparison, 249 people were killed and 553 injured in 257 accidents during last year's Eid-ul-Fitr holidays, it added.

Among the incidents, the deadliest one occurred in Rajbari's Daulatdia, where a bus plunged into the Padma river while waiting to board a ferry on Tuesday.

At least 26 bodies have been recovered, including 11 women, eight men, and seven children. Twenty-two bodies have been handed over to their families.

Another major accident took place on March 22 in Cumilla's Jangalia Kochua area, when at least 12 people were killed after a mail train hit a Mamun Paribahan bus at a level crossing. Another 20 were injured.

RSF Executive Director Saidur Rahman said most accidents stem from poor management, lack of monitoring, and negligence in the transport sector.

For instance, he said, the Daulatdia tragedy reflects widespread mismanagement.

"Reckless driving, unfit vehicles, poor road management, and weak law enforcement are the main causes of road accidents in the country," he told The Daily Star.

He also said clear policies

on drivers' working hours -- particularly for long distance bus and truck drivers -- must be introduced and enforced.

The Bangladesh Passenger Welfare Association (BPWA), however, reported slightly different figures, saying at least 285 people were killed and 729 injured in 270 accidents between March 18 and 25.

Last year, 322 people died in 315 accidents during the same period, it said.



Talking to The Daily Star, BPWA General Secretary Mojammel Haque said probe reports into major accidents are rarely published, allowing similar incidents to recur every year.

"The causes are identified, but no effective steps are taken. The previous government ignored many of these incidents, allowing transport owners to act recklessly. We now see the current government also speaking on their behalf. As a result, the owners continue to act irresponsibly," he added.

Meanwhile, Highway Police reported at least 90 deaths and 128 injuries in 142 accidents during the Eid period.

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## Unlicensed kitchen markets plague DSCC

Only 12 of 116 within Dhaka South registered

DIPAN NANDY

Only 12 of the 116 private kitchen markets operating under the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) are legally registered, while the remaining 104 continue to operate without oversight, often encroaching on footpaths or land owned by government agencies and private individuals.

Although these markets supply essential goods to lakhs of residents, their lack of registration hampers revenue collection and raises concerns over public health, fire safety, and urban management.

To regulate such establishments, the DSCC introduced a policy in 2022 requiring all private markets -- excluding supershops and shopping malls -- to obtain licences.

However, enforcement has been slow. According to data from the DSCC Estate Department, only 12 private markets have registered in the last three and a half years. Of them, only Shantinagar Kitchen Market has a valid, up-to-date licence.

Under the 2022 policy, a private market is defined as any land or establishment where daily trade takes place between multiple buyers and sellers. Operators must obtain a licence from the Estate Department, renew it annually, and comply with zoning, health, and safety regulations.

Failure to comply is a punishable offence under Section 92 of the City Corporation Act, which allows authorities to shut down markets, impose fines, or take legal action.

The licensing process is relatively affordable. Applicants must pay a Tk 500 fee, followed by an annual renewal fee -- Tk 215 per square metre for markets on main roads and Tk



**These practices deprive the government of legitimate revenue. Authorities should identify such syndicates and investigate whether political figures, influential groups, or law enforcement members are involved.**

ADIL MOHAMMED KHAN, Urban planner

108 per square metre for those on secondary roads.

For example, a 1,500-square-metre market on a main road would require an annual fee of Tk 2.15 lakh.

On September 2 last year, the DSCC issued a public notice reiterating that operating without a valid licence is illegal and punishable under the Local Government (City Corporation)

Act, 2009.

DSCC Chief Estate Officer Mobasswer Hasan told The Daily Star, "As the policy is new, many people are still unaware of it. We are working to raise awareness. After Eid, we will begin conducting mobile courts against illegal markets."

Headed that the corporation plans to re-inspect these sites to assess their suitability for commercial use. "We will verify whether the locations are appropriate for markets before making a final decision," he said.

Urban planner Adil Mohammed Khan said operating private raw markets without licences is unlawful, as it violates the 2022 policy.

He noted that these markets generate significant revenue, a portion of which should go to the city corporation.

Calling it a failure of authorities, he said many markets remain unlicensed.

He also questioned how such markets continue to operate and under whose patronage, suggesting the possible involvement of syndicates engaged in extortion or informal collections.

"These practices deprive the government of legitimate revenue," he said, adding that authorities should identify such syndicates and investigate whether political figures, influential groups, or law enforcement members are involved. "If proven, legal action must be taken."

## Zubaida stresses global partnership for child welfare

UNB, Dhaka

Dr Zubaida Rahman, spouse of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, joined the closing session of the "Fostering the Future Together: Global Coalition Summit" at the White House in Washington, DC on Wednesday.

The two-day summit, attended by first ladies and spouses of leaders from over 45 countries, focused on advancing children's well-being and future prospects. Dr Zubaida participated at the invitation of US First Lady Melania Trump.

Leading a four-member delegation, she was accompanied by Dhaka University Professor

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



## Dhaka-Delhi ties vital for shared prosperity

Says Bangladesh envoy

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Riaz Hamidullah has underscored the strategic and people-centric importance of India-Bangladesh ties amid a shifting global order.

Addressing the Independence Day reception hosted by the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi, he said Dhaka places high importance on its partnership with New Delhi, calling it vital for shared prosperity and regional stability, reports The New Indian Express.

Indian Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh attended the event as the guest of honour while Foreign Secretary Vikram

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Boats remain moored along the banks of the Buriganga in Keraniganj upazila of Dhaka, as the city has yet to return fully to its usual hustle and bustle following the Eid holidays. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## BEGUM ROKEYA UNIVERSITY, RANGPUR

### Liberation War monument lies incomplete after 13yrs

S DILIP ROY

Construction of "Swadhinata Smarak", the first Liberation War monument on Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur (BRUR) campus, remains incomplete even after 13 years, despite the change of five vice-chancellors at the university.

The monument has an 11,696-square-foot base, featuring three fringe-like stone pillars that symbolise the participation of people from different walks of life and their sacrifices in the Liberation War.

A 20-foot tunnel-like canopy will connect the pillars, representing the unity and collective struggle of the people during the war. The pillars will bear engravings depicting wartime memories, with murals behind them.

According to BRUR sources, the monument's construction began in December 2012 during the tenure of the then vice-chancellor Prof Md Abdul Jalil Mia, with funding from Janata Bank.

The foundation stone was laid on November 28, 2013, by the then VC Prof Dr AKM Nur-un-Nabi. However, the work was halted shortly afterwards. Later, the construction work resumed during the

tenure of the following VC, Prof Dr Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah.

The project's cost was initially estimated at Tk 1.30 crore. Later, the then VC Prof Kalimullah proposed increasing the budget to Tk 4.30 crore.

However, following allegations of corruption in the project, the Ministry of Education in December 2019 instructed the university to conduct an investigation through the University Grants Commission (UGC).

As the investigation found evidence supporting the allegations, the ministry halted the work of three major projects of the university -- the Swadhinata Smarak, a research institute, and a 10-storey female dormitory. Since then, these projects

have remained stalled for years. Although the construction of the research institute and the female dormitory resumed recently, work on the Swadhinata Smarak did not.

Tasbiul Habib Nishad, a student of the Political Science department, said, "The current administration has resumed many stalled projects. I hope the work on this monument will also begin soon."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



## Hatirjheel OC, ASI closed over shutdown of showroom

STAR REPORT

The officer-in-charge (OC) of Hatirjheel Police Station and an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) have been withdrawn from their posts following the forced shutdown of a Nobin Fashion showroom in Dhaka's Moghbazar before Eid-ul-Fitr.

OC Golam Mortuza has been attached to the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) headquarters, while the ASI has been sent to Rajarbagh Police Lines, according to a DMP press release issued yesterday.

The move comes amid criticism over alleged police inaction during the incident and a court order directing authorities to reopen the outlet within 24 hours.

An "unexpected situation" arose on March 20 between traders and a showroom over a discounted panjabi sale at Bishal Centre market, said the release signed by Deputy Commissioner (Media) Muhammad Talebur Rahman.

A probe committee has been formed to determine whether any police personnel were involved, it added.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



Work on the Kalurghat-Chaktai road and dyke project in Chattogram is still underway, nearly nine years after it was launched in July 2017 with a completion target of three years.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## NOR'WESTERS, HAILSTORMS 3,500 homes, crops on 4,043 hectares of land damaged



MD QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

At least 3,500 homes and crops on 4,043 hectares of land sustained significant damage in a spell of nor'westers and hailstorms over the past week across Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

The most extensive damage occurred when a sudden hailstorm, coupled with a nor'wester, swept through the upazila on Tuesday night, lasting only four to five minutes but leaving a trail of destruction.

"Around 3,000 houses, mostly thatched and tin-roofed ones, were severely damaged in Jagannathpur, Gorea, Salondor and Awliapur unions," said Khairul Islam, Sadar upazila nirbahari officer.

Shahida Begum of Madarganj village in Sadar upazila said the hailstones punctured the tin roof of her house and caused considerable damage.

"We have no means to repair the damage without assistance," she added.

Md Sujam Islam of Kachubari village said many families

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

## Kalurghat-Chaktai road project drags on for 9yrs

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

The Kalurghat-Chaktai road and dyke project in Chattogram has remained unfinished for nine years despite four deadline extensions.

Stipulated to be completed within three years, the 8.5km road and dyke project from the Kalurghat Bridge intersection to the Chaktai Canal in Chattogram was initiated in July 2017.

However, a myriad of issues, including prolonged delays, cost overruns, and complications over land acquisition, have stalled the project time and again over the past nine years, raising questions about planning, coordination, and accountability in public infrastructure projects.

"Repeated extensions mean the project was not properly planned before its approval," said Delwar Majumder, an urban planner and former chairman of the Chattogram centre of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB).

"Such delays not only increase costs but also prevent the project from serving the public as intended," he added.

The Chattogram Development Authority (CDA), the implementing agency, took up the project to improve connectivity and mitigate waterlogging in the port city by building a four-lane alternative road and an embankment along the Karnaphuli riverbank.

According to project documents, the initial estimated cost was Tk 2,275.52 crore, with the deadline set for June 2020.

However, after two revisions and four deadline extensions, the

cost rose to Tk 2,779.39 crore, and the latest deadline has been set for June this year.

The authorities, however, said the project is unlikely to be completed by the latest deadline and would have to be extended further till December this year.

The project includes two major components: construction of the road and the dyke. Additional works include six bus bays, three pedestrian overpasses, 353-metre connecting roads, 9,165-metre New Jersey barriers, 15,057 square metres of walkways, seven pump houses, seven

Spectra Engineers Limited is carrying out the construction work.

"Our work is ongoing in full swing, but CDA failed to allocate land on time. This is causing the delay," said an engineer of the firm, requesting anonymity.

"It seems like a never-ending project," said Lokman Hossain, a resident of Kolpolok Residential Area.

However, despite the delays, the project is already attracting local visitors.

Several families were seen visiting the riverbank.

"It's a new place to spend time



electrical substations, 1,084 LED streetlights, and 12 sluice gates with water pumps.

Visiting the project sites recently, this correspondent observed that sluice gate construction and earth-filling work were underway at Kalurghat.

At Chaktai, while road and dyke construction were completed, pump installation work was still in progress.

Data from the project show that about 85 percent of the total work has been completed.

with family near the river in a natural environment," said Tanvir Chowdhury, a government employee who came with his wife and son.

"Around 90 percent of the work for dyke construction has been completed. We faced land acquisition issues from the beginning, which stalled the project work. Several land acquisition cases are still pending. We hope to complete the project by this December," said Razib Das, project director and executive engineer of CDA.

## Rice aid shortage leaves fishers in Bhola struggling Many forced to borrow, some turn to illegal fishing

SUSHANTA GHOSH, from Bhola

Nearly half of the fishermen in Bhola are being deprived of the government's rice assistance amid the ongoing ban on fishing.

Officials concerned said a shortage of rice has prompted the situation.

Faced with uncertainty looming over their livelihood while not being provided assistance, many fishermen are forced to catch fish illegally, defying the ban, while others are largely relying on borrowed money to meet daily expenses.

Visiting the fishers' community in Shibpur union of Bhola Sadar upazila, this correspondent witnessed a grim situation.

Fishermen alleged that around 1,700 out of nearly 3,000 of them living in the area have not received government rice support during the ongoing fishing ban. As a result, many families are struggling to remain afloat.



"The two-month ban has been in place since March, but many of us have not received the government's rice support yet. We passed a very difficult Eid," said fisherman Md Yousuf.

Most fishermen had to borrow from NGOs and local moneylenders to survive, said Hadis Mia, another fisherman.

Residents of the fishing village said they are uncertain when the rice assistance will arrive.

Due to the financial hardship, some fishermen are continuing to catch fish illegally in the Meghna river, defying the ban, reportedly by managing local authorities, alleged locals.

Ranu Begum, a union parishad member, confirmed that around 1,700 local fishers did not receive rice assistance despite having official fishing cards.

According to sources at the Department of Fisheries in Bhola, although there are around 1,68,000 fishermen in the district, only 90,200 are currently receiving assistance.

Due to a shortage of rice in government warehouses, distribution has not been possible in Sadar, Charfesson, and Lal Mohan upazilas yet, leaving more than half of the district's fishermen without support, said the sources.

Md Iqbal Hasan, district fisheries officer in Bhola, said, "A shipment of rice has arrived at the port, and we are trying to ensure distribution among fishermen as soon as possible."

## 274 killed on roads

FROM PAGE 3

Accidents increase during Eid due to poor driver skills, weak road engineering, lack of coordination among agencies, and widespread violations of traffic rules, Additional IGP of Highway Police Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star.

"Many drivers forget they are responsible for 35 to 40 passengers," he said, noting that speeding remains a major issue, with vehicles often exceeding the 80 kmph limit.

Referring to the Dhaka-Chattogram highway, he said there are 642 feeder roads along the route, allowing CNGs and auto-rickshaws to enter the highway illegally.

During the Eid season, traffic increases

significantly on all roads and highways, and with only around 2,900 highway police personnel nationwide, managing the surge becomes even more difficult.

Motorcycles account for about 40 percent of accidents, largely due to high speeds, he added.

"Where there are no service roads, it becomes even harder to control such vehicles," he said.

He stressed that better coordination and planning are essential, suggesting that police be involved in road projects from the beginning to address operational challenges.

"Police alone cannot solve the problem. Drivers, passengers, and all stakeholders must share responsibility," he said.

## Zubaida stresses

FROM PAGE 3

Morshed Hasan Khan, orthopaedic surgeon Shah Muhammad Aman Ullah, and Barrister Mehnaz Mannan.

Earlier, Melania Trump inaugurated the summit at the US State Department. In the opening session, Zubaida underscored the need to ensure a safe and nurturing environment for children, highlighting Bangladesh's initiatives such as the family card and farmers' card programmes, alongside progress in education and healthcare.

She held courtesy meetings with Melania and other first ladies, exchanging views on strengthening global cooperation for child welfare. An exhibition featuring 11 leading US technology firms showcased innovations in children's education,

which she also visited. In her closing remarks, Zubaida thanked the US First Lady for hosting the summit and reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to collaboration, saying the country is keen to learn from global experiences and work in partnership "to ensure a brighter future for all children."

According to the prime minister's Additional Press Secretary Atiqul Rahman Rumon, Zubaida and Melania also agreed to cooperate on initiatives for children's welfare.

## Dhaka-Delhi ties vital Students

FROM PAGE 3

Misri was also present among senior officials and diplomats.

"As our government embarks on a robust mandate, we look forward to advancing our ties... premised on dignity, equality, mutual trust and respect, and shared benefits," Hamidullah said.

"If Dhaka and Delhi address issues in ways that yield gains for the common people, there is so much that our two countries can accomplish in shared interests," he said.

He also paid homage to the sacrifices of the 1971 Liberation War, recalling the "bravery and supreme sacrifice" of freedom fighters and acknowledging India's role.

Touching on recent political developments, he said Bangladesh witnessed a "participatory and exceptionally peaceful" democratic transition, reflecting people's focus on stability, rule of law and development. He reiterated Dhaka's commitment to working with India in navigating global uncertainties while upholding "open regionalism and multilateralism."

"Such should be our shared future, where none would prosper as others around lag behind," he said. "It is indeed possible for us to chart a pathway towards interdependent relations for generations... May Indo-Bangladesh friendship thrive."

Kirti Vardhan Singh said India looks forward to partnering with Bangladesh to advance mutual progress and prosperity.

"In this same spirit of cooperation, India warmly welcomes the new government of Bangladesh," he said.

He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the first leaders to engage with Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, underscoring the high importance India attaches to the relationship, reports New Kerala.com.

Singh said the Liberation War of 1971 and the immense sacrifices made in the struggle against exploitation, oppression, and hatred remain a shared legacy for both countries.

"Our progress reflects an enduring spirit of collaboration, nurtured through sustained efforts on both sides," he said.

## Students

FROM PAGE 9

"A college with 33,000 students cannot run with only 721 hostel seats," he added.

Abdur Razzak, vice-principal of BL College, said they had inspected all the halls shortly after they were closed.

"Titumir Hall is no longer fit for living. Nazrul and Subodh Chandra halls require full renovation before they can be reopened. Negligence by contractors and supervising engineers caused some delays to the renovation work. We hope to resolve these issues soon," he added.

## Liberation War

FROM PAGE 3

Moksedul Momin, a student of Bangla department at BRUR, echoed him.

Contacted, BRUR VC Prof Md Shawkat Ali said, "We have received Tk 77 crore in budget allocation. With this fund, work on the female dormitory and the research institute will be carried out. Some funds are also with the contractor. The remaining work of the Swadhinata Smarak will be completed in phases."

**Groom Wanted**  
Tall, beautiful (31) for senior officer of multinational company. Tall (5'9"-6') age (31-35), handsome, engineer, University Prof. Senior officer of multinational company.  
No media, direct parents.  
akazad196201715@gmail.com

Office of the  
**Gouripur Pourashava**  
Dist: Mymensingh

Memo No. 45.33.6123.002.14.001.26/11 Date: 08.03.2026

**Invitation for e-Tender OTM/NCT**  
No. 01/2025-2026 (LGCRRP)

e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) for the procurement of following works:

Sl No.	Tender ID & Pkg No.	Name of works	Tender security	Tender document selling last date & time	Tender closing & opening date & time
01	1235066 LGCRRP/Gouripur/2025-26/W-07	Upgrading of Uni-block road 1. Shahid Harun Park Sarok starting from bazaar main road to Bijoy 71 Sriti Shoudho West site) ch-0.00m to 108.0m. 2. In front of Bijoy 71 Sriti Shoudho starting from Press club Mur to Gobindobari (North site) ch-0.0m to 60.0m. 3. Mohila College Road starting from Bijoy 71 Mur to Mohila College (West Site) ch-0.00m to ch-90.0m under Gouripur Pourashava, Dist:Mymensingh.	1,00,000, 00	30.03.2026 16.00	31.03.2026 14.00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP System Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tenders, registration required in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd))  
The tender security and the fee of downloading e-Tender document to be deposited online through any registered bank to CPTU. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))  
Payment to be made subject to availability of Fund.

Md. Aminul Islam  
Executive Engineer (In-charge)  
Gouripur Pourashava  
Dist: Mymensingh

GD-652

**PRAYER TIMING**  
MARCH 27

Fajr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4-45 12-30 4-45 6-20 7-45  
JAMAAT 5-20 1-15 5-00 6-25 8-15  
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## INTERNATIONAL

**HORMUZ 'TOLL'**  
A legally risky  
route for  
shippers

AFP, London

Here are the latest facts about Iran's control of the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial trade waterway virtually closed off by its forces in the Middle East war.

**HOW ARE SHIPS CROSSING?**

Maritime trackers indicate that a handful of vessels are still crossing daily through the strait, which is guarded by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) — most of them leaving the Gulf. Some have taken a new Iranian approved route through its waters, dubbed the "Tehran Toll Booth" by leading shipping journal Lloyd's List. At least one vetted vessel paid \$2 million to use the corridor around Larak Island just off Iran's coast, it reported.

**WHO USED THE CORRIDOR?**

Lloyd's List reported Monday that it had tracked more than 20 ships using the emerging route, most of them Greek-owned but others Indian, Pakistani



owned or linked to China. In a sign that commodity vessels were gaining approval to use the route, since the start of last week four that crossed the Strait of Hormuz kept their AIS transponders on while using the corridor, while at least five more that crossed sent signals in close proximity to the passage, an AFP analysis of Kpler data showed.

**WHAT HAS IRAN SAID PUBLICLY?**

In a statement dated Sunday and released late Tuesday via the International Maritime Organization, Tehran reiterated its stance that the strait was open, but only to some. It said "non-hostile vessels" and those not "belonging to or associated with" Israel, the US and other "aggressors" could cross "subject to compliance with... the realities arising from the ongoing conflict".

**IS IRAN ACTING ILLEGALLY?**

Charging fees to cross strait would "lack a valid legal basis", Roscini said. Transit passage rights through straits remain applicable during conflicts and suspending commercial navigation through Hormuz "cannot be lawful" barring exceptional circumstances, he added.



Israeli emergency services, security officials and onlookers gather at the site of a missile strike after Iranian barrages on Israel, amid US-Israel tensions with Iran, in central Israel, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

**POTENTIAL US GROUND ATTACK****Iran fortifying Kharg Island defences: US intel**

CNN ONLINE

Iran has been laying traps and moving additional military personnel and air defenses to Kharg Island in recent weeks in preparation for a possible US operation to take control of the island, according to multiple people familiar with US intelligence reporting on the issue. The Trump administration has

the Iranians have moved additional shoulder-fired, surface-to-air guided missile systems known as MANPADS there in recent weeks, the sources said.

"I would be very worried about this," said retired Adm James Stavridis, the former Nato Supreme Allied Commander who now serves as a CNN military analyst. "Iranians are clever and ruthless. They will do everything they can

**"Iranians are clever and ruthless. They will do everything they can to inflict maximum casualties on US forces on the ships at sea."**

Retd. Admiral James Stavridis



been weighing using US troops to seize the tiny island in the northeastern Persian Gulf — an economic lifeline for Iran that handles roughly 90 percent of the country's crude exports — as leverage over the Iranians to coerce them to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, CNN has reported.

But US officials and military experts say there would be significant risks involved in such a ground operation, including a large number of US casualties. The island has layered defenses, and

to inflict maximum casualties on US forces both on the ships at sea, and especially once ground troops are anywhere in their sovereign territory."

Iran has also been laying traps including anti-personnel and anti-armor mines around the island, the sources said, including on the shoreline where US troops could possibly stage an amphibious landing if Trump moved forward with a ground operation.

Some allies of the president are raising serious questions

about whether there is a need to attempt such an operation, since successfully taking the island would not, on its own, resolve problems related to the Strait of Hormuz and Iran's stranglehold on the global energy market, the source added.

US Central Command declined to comment on Iranian actions on Kharg. The US military had already targeted Kharg with strikes on March 13, with Central Command saying that 90 targets had been hit, including "naval mine storage facilities, missile storage bunkers, and multiple other military sites." Trump had announced the attack by saying that US forces had avoided hitting oil infrastructure on the island "for reasons of decency."

An Israeli source said there is concern that taking control of Kharg would lead to attacks by Iranian drones and shoulder-fired missiles, leading to the deaths of American troops. The speaker of Iran's parliament on Wednesday warned the country's "enemies" against attempting to occupy any Iranian islands.

**Israel removes Araqchi, Qalibaf from hit list**  
Pak source says after Islamabad's request to US

REUTERS, Islamabad

Israel removed Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf from its hit list after Pakistan urged Washington to press Israel not to target them, a Pakistani source with knowledge of the discussions told Reuters yesterday.

"The Israelis had their coordinates and wanted to take them out, we told the US if they are also eliminated then there is no one else to talk to, hence the US asked the Israelis to back off," the source said.

Pakistan's foreign office did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Israeli Prime Minister's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Wall Street Journal first reported that the two top Iranian officials had been temporarily removed from Israel's list of officials to eliminate as they explore possible peace talks. The two officials have been removed from the list for up to four or five days, the Journal said, citing US officials, but did not mention any Pakistani role in it.

**MOVE TO END WAR**  
**US, Iran outline starkly different demands**

CNN ONLINE

Almost exactly one month ago, US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner met indirectly with the Iranians in Geneva as the Trump administration continued to claim diplomacy was its preferred option. Two days later, the US and Israel launched their war against Iran.

Now, the United States is again seeking to return to talks after President Donald Trump's about face on Monday when he announced the two countries were negotiating an end to the conflict — but there are significant hurdles on the path back to the negotiating table despite public optimism voiced by the White House.

The specter of continued military action by the US and Israel looms large over potential discussions. Meanwhile, Tehran perceives itself to possess a key tool that it did not have prior to the outbreak of the war: virtual control over the Strait of Hormuz. "The very basics must be agreed on before the two sides board and take off for negotiations," one regional source, told CNN adding that Iranians have now given "a maximum no to a maximalist offer."

Earlier this week, the US conveyed, via Pakistan a 15-point list of demands for Iran. Many of the demands echo those made by the US before the war began: Iran committing to no nuclear weapons, the US taking possession of Iran's highly enriched uranium, limits on Tehran's defense capabilities, and an end of Iran's support for proxies.

If that is truly the US' position, "there is no world where there'll be successful negotiations," Nate Swanson, a former career US government official who served as director for Iran at the National Security Council, told CNN.

The other key player in the war, Israel, is concerned that the US may declare a one-month ceasefire in order to facilitate negotiations with Iran, two Israeli sources told CNN. However, the country remains skeptical about the prospect of a breakthrough, according to one of the sources.

"The maximum Iran might be willing to give does not meet the minimum the US is demanding," the source said, adding that Israel views several elements of the US framework as "positive and good for Israel" — in particular those regarding Iran's nuclear program and the activities of its regional proxies.

On Wednesday, an Iranian official outlined the country's own list of demands, according to state-run media outlet Press TV. They include a complete halt to "aggression and assassinations," establishment of concrete mechanisms to ensure the war on Iran does not resume, guaranteed and clearly defined payment of war damages and reparations, an end to military operations across all fronts and for all Iranian proxies throughout the region, and a guarantee that Iran can exercise sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran's ability to snarl the key waterway, despite US progress degrading Iran's military capabilities, has caused the price of fuel to skyrocket and set global markets on edge. It is also a potential edge for Iran in future negotiations.

Still, the potential for further US military action is looming. Approximately 1,000 US soldiers with the Army's 82nd Airborne Division are expected to deploy in coming days to the Middle East, according to two sources familiar with the matter, adding to the growing military firepower in the region as the Trump administration says it is in talks with Iran to end the conflict.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt warned Wednesday that if "Iran fails to accept the reality of the current moment," Trump "is prepared to unleash hell."

**Mullally, first female Archbishop of Canterbury**

AFP, Canterbury

A former nurse made history Wednesday when she was enthroned as the Archbishop of Canterbury, the first woman to lead the centuries-old mother church of the world's 85 million-strong Anglican community.

Sarah Mullally, 63, formally steps into the role after an abuse scandal led to the departure of her predecessor.

The former midwife was formally installed in the historic ceremony at Canterbury Cathedral in southeast England in front of around 2,000 people, including heir to the throne Prince William and his wife Catherine.

In accordance with tradition, the ceremony began with Mullally knocking three times with a staff on the cathedral's west door to request admission.

Dressed in deep yellow-gold robes, she was greeted by local school children who asked why she had been sent.

"I am sent as archbishop to serve you, to proclaim the love of Christ and with you to worship and love him with heart and soul, mind and strength," she responded.

The ceremony then culminated with Mullally being seated on two different thrones.

The seats symbolise the dual responsibilities of the role — as a bishop in the diocese of Canterbury and as the spiritual leader of Anglicans worldwide.

Mullally's predecessor Justin Welby announced his resignation as head of the Church of England in November 2024 over failures in handling an abuse scandal.



Taliban security personnel speak with Afghan woman Samira Muhammadi as she searches for her son, Aref Khan, killed in a Pakistani airstrike on a drug rehabilitation centre, during a mass funeral at the Eid Gah Mosque in Kabul yesterday. Pakistan is continuing military operations against Afghanistan after the end of a temporary pause, the spokesperson of Pakistan's foreign ministry said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

**Madagascar's Gen Z left out of new govt**

AFP, Antananarivo

Madagascar's interim leader on Wednesday unveiled the make-up of the island nation's new government, still without representatives of the Gen Z movement that helped topple the president last year.

Colonel Michael Randrianirina, who seized power in the wake of the youth-led protests against persistent water and power shortages, fired his prime minister and cabinet on March 9 without explanation.

The career military officer tapped Mamitiana Rajoanarison, a former police officer who has led Madagascar's anti-money-laundering body since 2021, as his replacement head of government on March 15.

Since then, both men have been working to recruit for the new government — with all prospective cabinet members forced to submit to a lie detector test.

## A tragedy rooted in systemic failure

Strong political will needed to reduce transport-sector vulnerabilities

It is tempting to think of life in Bangladesh in terms of something expendable given how easily it is cut short almost every day, every month, and during every festival—often in unimaginable yet preventable accidents. The incident that took place at the Daulatdia ferry terminal in Rajbari on Wednesday is a stark reminder of this reality that citizens have to live with. It involved a bus carrying at least 40 passengers that rolled off a ferry pontoon before plunging into the Padma as onlookers watched in horror. While the exact cause of this tragic accident remains unclear, there is little uncertainty about what became of most passengers inside the bus. As of writing this editorial, 26 bodies have been recovered, and at least nine rescued alive. Many are still missing, however, as rescue efforts continue.

After every such tragedy, we see officials undertake a routine response, and this time was no exception. But why does so little change despite the repeated loss of lives in transport accidents? Earlier this week, a train-bus collision in Cumilla claimed 12 lives. Between March 19 and 24, at least 28 more people were killed in accidents across the country. With the long Eid holiday period still underway, the toll is likely to rise further. What is both tragic and unconscionable is that such tragedies keep recurring every year across roads, railways, and waterways. In most cases, they are rooted in human negligence, enabled by systemic mismanagement in a sector deeply influenced by political power play and mismanagement. Unfortunately, not even the non-political interim government was able to fix this, which showed how deeply dysfunctional the sector has become.

The pattern that follows each major accident is all too familiar by now: a committee is formed, findings are submitted, and a few individuals are punished. Meanwhile, powerful actors within the transport sector remain beyond accountability. As a result, meaningful reform never materialises, leaving the system vulnerable to repeat tragedies. In the case of the Daulatdia incident, the probe body will probably identify a definitive cause, but it remains to be seen whether the broader safety concerns will be addressed. Passenger safety at ferry terminals—through adequate railings, safe boarding and disembarking practices, etc—demands urgent attention. So too does the chaotic environment at terminals, where vehicles race along narrow, uneven approach roads in competition to board ferries.

Accident risks in the transport sector cannot be mitigated on a piecemeal basis. What is required is a holistic assessment of risks, followed by strict measures to resolve or reduce them, even if some actions call for heavy-handed discipline of those within the sector. The government must not shy away from such measures because of partisan interests. The safety of citizens should matter above all other considerations.

## End sexual abuse in newsrooms

Media outlets must ensure safe working environment

We are deeply concerned by the findings of a recent survey on workplace sexual harassment of journalists in the country. According to the study, 15 percent of surveyed journalists reported experiencing sexual harassment at work, with women facing significantly higher rates of verbal, online and physical abuse compared to their male counterparts. At a time when journalists play a crucial role in shaping public discourse and holding power to account, the lack of safe and dignified working conditions within newsrooms is indeed alarming.

According to the survey, 60 percent of women who experienced harassment reported verbal abuse, compared to nine percent of men. Nearly half of the women surveyed reported experiencing online harassment, as opposed to 15 percent of men, while physical harassment was reported by 24 percent of women and seven percent of men. Seven women and two men said they had been raped. The study also revealed weak institutional responses when incidents of harassment were reported. In many cases, complaints about verbal abuse went unaddressed—43 percent of cases reported by women and 60 percent reported by men received no formal action. And when action was taken, it was often limited to issuing warnings. This raises serious questions about media organisations' commitment to holding perpetrators accountable and the absence of robust mechanisms to address such complaints.

The newly approved Workplace and Educational Institutions Sexual Harassment Prevention Ordinance, 2026 provides a strong legal framework to address these issues. It mandates the formation of an internal complaint committee at every workplace and educational institution, tasked with investigating complaints, ensuring the safety of complainants, and recommending disciplinary measures ranging from reprimands to termination. This law is expected to strengthen accountability, enforce protection, and foster safer, more inclusive working environments across the country. Media organisations must form these committees right away.

To complement these legal measures, the Sexual Harassment Response Protocol for Media Professionals provides awareness-building measures, clear provisions for punishment, and steps to create an effective support network for victims. In addition, the Women Journalists Network Bangladesh has reportedly signed memoranda of understanding with Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and the Institute of Psychology and Health to help prevent harassment and offer survivors legal and psychological support. These initiatives, if implemented effectively, can make a meaningful difference for harassment survivors.

Media organisations must have a workplace culture where harassment is neither tolerated nor normalised, and where survivors feel safe to speak out without fear of retaliation or professional repercussions. They must lead by example and establish clear, accessible and confidential complaint mechanisms, ensure timely and impartial investigations, and enforce meaningful penalties for any misconduct. There should be no place for sexual harassment in newsrooms.

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Marlon Brando declines Oscar for Godfather

On this day in 1973, American actor Marlon Brando refused his "Best Actor" Oscar for The Godfather, sending fellow actress and activist Sacheen Littlefeather to decline it in protest of Hollywood's treatment of Native Americans.

# 'Strategic capacity' in fossil fuels is not the answer to our crisis



Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem is research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

KHONDAKER GOLAMMOAZZEM

Bangladesh has been entrapped in medium-term energy challenges because of the US-Israel war against Iran and its consequent impact on crude oil infrastructure and supply chains based around the Strait of Hormuz. The government has so far maintained a roll-out plan by rationing energy supply. However, with the expected demand for air-cooling systems and the need for electricity and diesel for irrigation for Boro rice cultivation, energy requirements are likely to increase further from April. The coming month(s) will also require fertiliser supply for Boro cultivation, which the government is trying to manage through imports.

Meanwhile, industrial production, both in export-oriented and domestic markets, has started to decline. Rising energy prices are likely to increase the shipment costs of imported products, which could push food inflation further. Therefore, addressing challenges from a prolonged energy crisis would require medium- to long-term strategies.

The government's top priority must be to establish a structured system of energy and electricity rationing, ensuring that limited resources are directed towards vital economic activities such as production, job creation, and export industries. Several think tanks, academics, and policy analysts have offered suggestions for building strategic capacity in fossil fuels, particularly diesel and LNG, to address emergency requirements. Some are enthusiastic about using imported coal or exploring domestic coal as a strategic option for energy security. Such initiatives would wrongly mix short-term strategies with long-term priorities.

It should be noted that borrowing to import LNG, developing additional LNG and diesel infrastructure based on interest-bearing long-term loans, and importing or mining coal from local mines using foreign loans and public funds will further deepen the indebtedness of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, and severely damage the sector's long-term energy transition plan under the Renewable Energy Policy 2025.

As part of a transition towards clean energy, a more cost-effective solution would be to explore domestic natural gas from "probable" wells. The government should immediately expedite drilling works in Sriakail Deep-1, Mobarakpur

Deep-1, and Fenchuganj South-1. It should also allocate additional funds to explore natural gas in other "probable" and "possible" onshore sites. Besides, foreign companies currently involved in onshore gas exploration must be pushed to update their operations regularly. The Tengratilla Gas Field (Chhatak West) is now out of international dispute and ready for re-exploration. The chances of discovering new reserves there are high. As a long-term strategy, the government must take bold steps to explore offshore gas blocks. Petrobangla must learn from earlier failures and proceed with re-tendering based on feedback from international oil and gas companies.



Long queues of cars and motorcycles stretched from the Trust Filling Station in the Bijoy Sarani area beyond the BAF Officers' Mess in Tejaon, Dhaka, on March 24, 2026.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The government should also emphasise replacing diesel-based irrigation with solar-based systems soon. Approximately 13 lakh irrigation pumps annually use 10 lakh tonnes of diesel, about 15 percent of total diesel imports, costing about \$1 billion each year. A rapid shift to solar irrigation could significantly reduce import dependency and save foreign currency. Moreover, solar irrigation with net metering could generate additional income for farmers and installers during the off-season from power distribution companies. Hence, the ministry needs to boldly act to accelerate net-metering connections through distribution companies such as the Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board (BREB).

promote EVs, charging stations, and related maintenance facilities across the country. Bangladesh's bilateral trade agreements with countries that promote diesel, petrol, or LNG-based transport need to be revisited. The ministries of transport, power and energy, finance, and planning must work together to develop nationwide infrastructure for EV-based transport as soon as possible.

The power and energy ministry should also forge ahead with its renewable energy initiatives—the National Rooftop Solar Programme 2025 and utility-scale solar power plants through public procurement. Successful implementation of these

and sustainable renewable energy solutions across power generation, irrigation, and industry and household use. This transition would significantly reduce demand for imported fossil fuels—diesel, crude oil, LNG and LPG—in later years. There is no need for new investments in fossil fuel infrastructure that would burden the country with long-term debt for 20-25 years. Bangladesh is not in a position to bear that burden.

Ultimately, energy security and sustainability will depend not on diesel, LNG, coal, or LPG, but on solar, wind, hydro and waste-to-energy systems for power generation, transmission, and distribution.

## What an empty Dhaka teaches us about how we live



Monjurul Hoque Bhuiyan is an executive in the Department of Corporate Regulatory Affairs at US Bangla Assets Ltd. He can be reached at monjurul.bhuiyan01@northsouth.edu.

MONJURUL HOQUE BHUIYAN

On a regular weekday afternoon, Dhaka's roads are overwhelming. Horns blare, the air smells of diesel, people hurry by, and it feels like several million people are all trying to find space at once. But during the short duration of Eid holidays, the city changes completely. The usual crowds disappear, the streets clear up, the dust settles, and for once, you can stand on the overpasses in Banani or Mohakhali and actually hear the wind.

Every year, at least one crore people—sometimes even more—leave the capital to visit family. For those who stay behind, the city feels almost perfect. Suddenly, you can drive from Uttara to Dhanmondi in less than half an hour. The air gets noticeably cleaner as the city takes a break from pollution. However, behind the relief of empty roads, there is a deeper truth: for many, Dhaka is more of a workplace than a true home. The rest of the country relies on this one city for work, education, and a better life. Everyone, from a rickshaw-puller to an executive, endures the chaos because most opportunities in Bangladesh are concentrated in this overburdened metropolis. But when they leave, the city becomes a shadow of its regular self. Local tea stalls close, the vibrant neighbourhood activity fades, and the city's underlying infrastructure

is exposed.

While Dhaka's Eid migration is dramatic, big cities like Mumbai, Lagos and Jakarta see similar patterns during major holidays. Some of these big cities have addressed this challenge in different ways. For example, in Mumbai, the development of satellite towns like Navi Mumbai has helped ease pressure on the city centre by spreading out population and job opportunities into neighbouring areas. Similarly, Lagos has supported the growth of nearby towns such as Ikeja and Lekki through infrastructure investment and by encouraging businesses to set up outside the main city. These cases show that thoughtful decentralisation and better regional planning can help large cities manage the stress caused by massive populations.

The "Eid version" of Dhaka offers a tantalising glimpse of the city's potential. The cleaner air and quiet streets show that better urban living conditions are physically possible. However, as recent urban studies highlight, these improvements are fleeting due to long-standing institutional weaknesses and centralised planning that benefit only a few. This reliance on centralisation leaves the city's infrastructure fundamentally strained, making

genuine decentralisation difficult and leaving both the city centre and its outskirts facing perpetual challenges.

To achieve lasting improvements, the government should decentralise key services and opportunities by actively supporting hospitals, universities, and industries in regional centres. This could be done through targeted public investment in building and upgrading facilities outside Dhaka and offering incentives for businesses to relocate or expand beyond the capital. Improving public transport modes, such as developing reliable, frequent commuter rail links between regional towns and Dhaka, would also make it practical for people to live and work outside the city. Urban planners can update zoning regulations to require mixed-use developments, ensuring that housing, business, and public facilities grow together in new satellite towns. Clear policy guidelines, with measurable targets, enforceable timelines, and dedicated budgets, would ensure accountability in implementing these initiatives.

Of course, there will be some challenges. Moving institutions, services, and industries away from the capital city that has run as the central hub for economic activities, education, and administrative work for so long will require significant collaboration between different levels of government, private investors, and local communities. There could be resistance from stakeholders who benefit from the current set-up. In addition, building strong regional economies will take time and may face obstacles, such as a lack of local expertise or slow infrastructure development. Addressing

these challenges will require consistent leadership, transparent monitoring, and flexibility to adapt policies as needed. Implementing evidence-based approaches would bring sustained improvements to urban life across Bangladesh, turning the Eid experience from an exception to the norm.

In a couple of days, those who left Dhaka for the holidays will all return. Trains will be packed at Kamalapur, traffic jams will return to the city roads, and the noise will be back. We will revert to our routines, dealing with traffic and crowds again.

For now, as we walk through these empty streets, we have a chance to turn this relief into real change. Dhaka's transformation during Eid is a clear call to action. Only with real decentralisation and investment in other regions, led by government, business and community efforts, can peace and liveability become part of daily life, not just a brief holiday moment.

As concrete next steps, every group has a role to play. Policymakers can begin public consultations to identify promising regional centres and commit to pilot projects outside Dhaka. Businesses might consider shifting part of their operations or opening new branches in the growing towns across the country. University students and young professionals can get involved in local civic initiatives or volunteer projects to improve their home districts. Citizens can contact their elected officials to advocate for better transport and healthcare facilities in their own communities and stay engaged with the planning processes. The choice is ours; let's make it.

# How to read Supreme Court's review judgment on caretaker government



**Barrister Khan Khalid Adnan** is advocate of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, fellow at the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, and head of the chamber at Khan Sajjar Rahman and Associates in Dhaka.

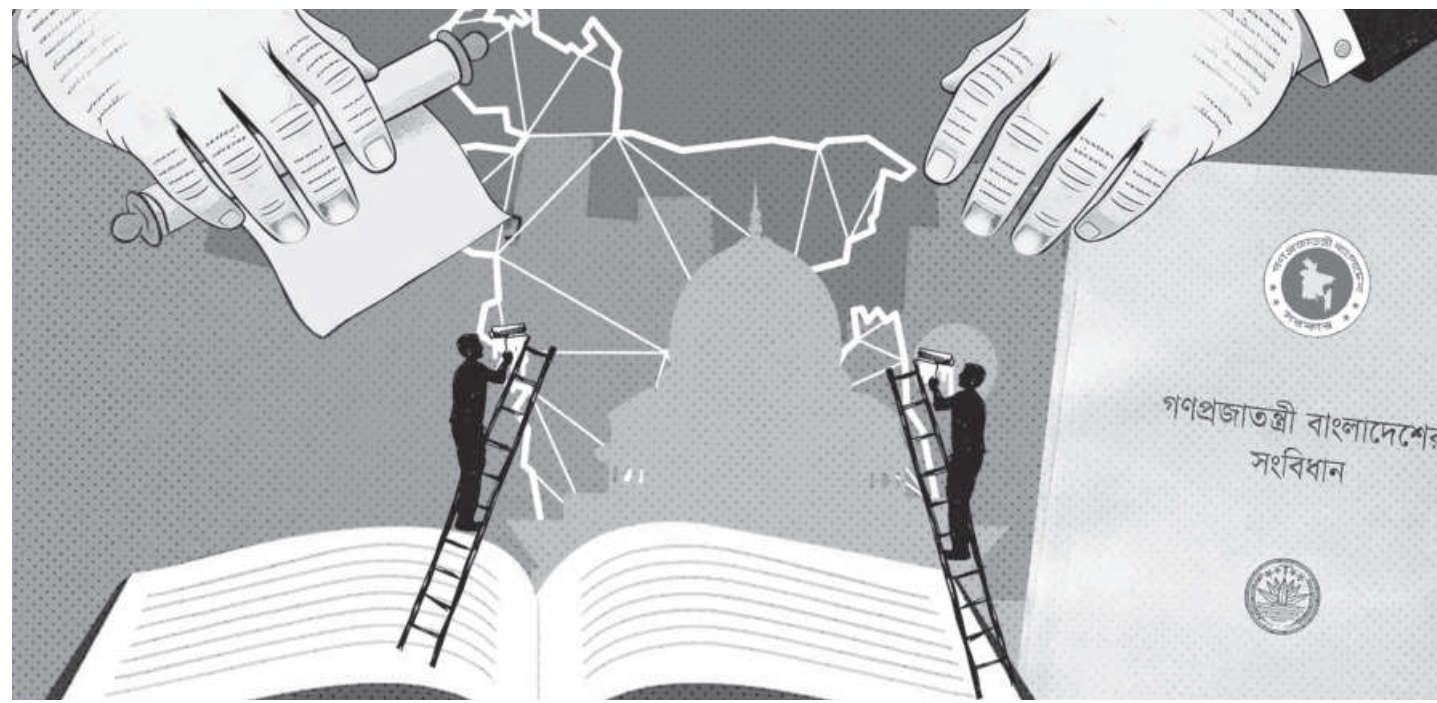
**KHAN KHALID ADNAN**

The short order in the 13th Amendment Review Judgment, authored by former Chief Justice Syed Rezaat Ahmed, was delivered on November 20, 2025, while the full judgment became available on March 12, 2026. The most important line in the Appellate Division's full review judgment is not the formal restoration of the caretaker government system, it is the court's own admission that its 2011 judgment—declaring the amendment unconstitutional and void—embraced a rigid and utopian model of democracy that ended up enabling "authoritarianism and dysfunctional electoral politics" and pushing the country towards a crisis of legitimacy (pp 38 to 40).

That is the real takeaway. The review bench has not merely corrected doctrine; it has acknowledged, in judicial language, that constitutional formalism helped wreck electoral credibility in Bangladesh.

What the court has actually done is quite precise. It has set aside the 2011 Appellate Division judgment "in its entirety" and revived Chapter IIA of Part IV of the constitution, meaning the old constitutional provisions on the non-party caretaker government now stand restored (pp 64, 73 to 74). But the court also insists that the revived provisions can operate only prospectively, because Articles 58B(1) and 58C(2) are triggered only after the dissolution of a sitting parliament and within 15 days of that dissolution (pp 62 to 64, 73 to 74). That is why the judgment says the restored provisions will lie dormant for the current cycle and can be invoked, at the earliest, "under the domain of the 13th Parliament" (p 63). That point matters now because the 13th parliament has already begun its first session.

The court's treatment of the caretaker system is therefore not nostalgic, even if its remedy is old. It does not say caretaker government is ideal in the abstract. It says democracy cannot be protected by clinging to the ritual that every temporary officeholder must be elected, while ignoring whether elections themselves are credible.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

The judgment ties democracy to free and fair elections, and then ties those elections to institutional safeguards that can neutralise the advantage of incumbency. It is, in effect, a rejection of the fiction that partisan control of the election time state is a sign of democratic maturity in a deeply distrustful polity. In Bangladesh, the court now says plainly that a fiction became the vehicle for democratic decay.

This is why the implications for the 15th Amendment appeals are so serious. Those appeals were previously adjourned to March 5 so that a new post-election bench could hear them. Whatever that bench now does, the review judgment has already shifted the ground beneath the case. Once the Supreme Court itself says the caretaker mechanism strengthened "the foundation of a substantive democratic architecture" (p 46), and once

it treats electoral credibility as integral to democracy, the constitutional defence of the 15th Amendment's repeal of caretaker government looks badly weakened. The blow becomes harsher when the court treats the gap between the 2011 short order and the full judgment as a fatal defect, and goes so far as to suggest that the 15th Amendment effectively preempted the judicial process and signalled to the court what outcome

records and in places appear to appreciate the argument that the principle of neutral election time administration may be constitutionally fundamental while the specific 1996 design remains open to legislative revision (pp 25 to 27, 41 to 42). This is one of the most important and under-noticeable features of the case. The court's theory of democracy is far more forceful about the need for neutrality than about

the logic of this judgment. Any attempt to gut neutrality and return the country to partisan election-time incumbency would collide head-on with the court's reasoning on democracy, popular sovereignty, and electoral integrity (pp 44 to 58). The review judgment does not forbid reform. It forbids bad faith masquerading as reform. Additionally, in undertaking any constitutional reform on this issue, parliament is required to give proper consideration to the pertinent observations made by the court.

The judgment's most ambitious move lies deeper still. The court distinguishes between parliament's amendment power under Article 142 and the constituent power of the people (pp 44 to 46; 52 to 55), which is a striking innovation. It allows the court to describe the 13th Amendment as more than an ordinary textual change, as an expression of sovereign popular will in response to a crisis of electoral legitimacy. This may pave the way for future constitutional reform by giving a stronger conceptual footing to democratic guardrails that emerge from broad public consensus. But it also carries an obvious risk. In Bangladesh, every faction sooner or later claims to speak for "the people." If constituent power becomes loose rhetoric rather than disciplined constitutional method, tomorrow's constitutional adventurism will simply borrow today's emancipatory language.

This is why the review judgment deserves thorough examination to appreciate its critical reasoning and analysis. It is right to reverse the 2011 disaster, to say that free and fair elections are not decorative to democracy but central to constitutional survival, to restore the legal possibility of a neutral election-time administration. But it also leaves parliament with the harder task, which courts are structurally reluctant to perform. The court has given no express direction to parliament to redesign the composition of the caretaker government. Its operative direction is narrower—restore Chapter IIA now, operate it later, and let the constitutional clock run from the life cycle of the current Parliament (pp 62 to 64, 73 to 74). With due respect, this does not fully reflect judicial statesmanship; rather, it may be more appropriately understood as a cautious judicial reopening.

What parliament does with that reopening will decide whether this verdict becomes a constitutional rescue or merely another chapter in Bangladesh's long habit of using law to postpone politics.

the political branches expected. That is not a minor institutional complaint; it is a judicial indictment of the constitutional sequence that abolished caretaker government in the first place.

Yet the review judgment is also more limited than many triumphalist readings suggest. It does not design a new caretaker model, tell parliament how to choose the chief adviser, or replace the old architecture with a modern one. The operative order simply revives Chapter IIA wholesale (pp 73 to 74). So the composition that now returns is not a freshly crafted judicial model; it is the old constitutional scheme by force of revival, not by force of new reasoning. To that extent, the court has restored a principle and a text, but not solved the design problem that helped destabilise the old system.

That distinction matters. The judgment

the sanctity of the retired chief justice-based appointment ladder. In other words, the judgment does not really constitutionalise every feature of the old caretaker model. It constitutionalises the need for a credible neutral safeguard.

That is where the present parliament enters. Since the 13th parliament has now begun its term, any amendment concerning the caretaker government belongs to this parliament, not to the courts and not to the expired transitional arrangement. Legally, parliament now has room to amend the revived framework before its own dissolution. Politically, however, it does not have a blank cheque. Any reform that narrows interim powers, removes retired judges from the centre of appointment politics, and gives the Election Commission a more operationally central role would be easier to defend under

# How East Pakistan became Bangladesh in global media



**Asif Bin Ali** is a geopolitical analyst and doctoral fellow at Georgia State University in the US. He can be reached at abinali2@gsu.edu.

**ASIF BIN ALI**

The Liberation War of 1971 remains one of the most consequential and painful chapters in the history of Bangladesh as well as South Asia. The immediate trigger of the war was the refusal of the Pakistani state to accept the 1970 electoral victory of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, followed by a brutal military crackdown on the Bangalee population. As the war unfolded, international media became central to how the conflict was understood worldwide. That process, however, was not politically neutral.

As Srinath Raghavan shows in *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh*, much of the early international discussion, especially among Western policymakers and a significant part of the media, framed the violence as an "East Pakistan crisis" or a "civil war." This framing mattered. To describe a state-run campaign of mass killing as a civil war was to hide the responsibility and make the conflict present like a symmetrical struggle between two wings of Pakistan, rather than a brutal military crackdown by the Pakistan Army against the Bangalee ethnic community. Raghavan notes that even Richard Nixon viewed the events in East Pakistan through the lens of civil war,

comparing them to Vietnam and thereby reducing the moral and political specificity of what was happening.

This early language shaped international perception in significant ways. "East Pakistan" was the language of the existing state structure. "Civil war" was the language of diplomatic caution. It also protected geopolitical convenience, allowing many in the West to see the conflict as an internal matter of Pakistan rather than as a crisis of mass atrocity, national self-determination of the Bangalee population, and colonial-style domination within a formally postcolonial state. In that sense, the battle over media representation was also a battle over political meaning.

The Pakistan authorities expelled foreign journalists from East Pakistan in late March 1971; much of the information that reached the outside world later came from refugees, scattered eyewitness testimony, and sources connected to the provisional Bangladeshi leadership. International reporting conveyed horror, but it was not always morally or conceptually precise. According to Raghavan, many reports used words such as "massacre," "slaughter," or "tragedy," while terms like

"genocide" and "holocaust" were still rare. He notes that only a few publications, such as Singapore's *The New Nation* and New York's *Saturday Review*, used that stronger language, and neither carried the influence of a major paper like the *Sunday Times*.

A major turning point came with Anthony Mascarenhas's famous report, "Genocide," published in *The Sunday Times* on June 13, 1971. In Raghavan's reading, this was the first major rupture in the earlier "civil war" frame. The report broke through the censorship and exposed the systematic character of the Pakistan Army's violence. After Mascarenhas's article came out, international media attention deepened and the moral vocabulary of the crisis began to shift. Mascarenhas helped reshape the international media framing.

At this point, the question of naming became even more important. The transformation of "East Pakistan" into "Bangladesh" in the global media was not merely semantic—it presented a significant political shift. "East Pakistan" described a province within an existing state. The name "Bangladesh" was a claim of the Bangalee people to express their political future. In this respect, Raghavan's discussion of Ravi Shankar and George Harrison's "Concert for Bangladesh" is especially significant. He does not say that the concert was the first time the name "Bangladesh" ever appeared in Western media. What he does argue is that the concert gave the name "Bangladesh" enormous visibility and used it consciously in place of more cautious alternatives such as "East Pakistan" or "East Bengal."

Raghavan writes that by invoking the name

"Bangladesh" and refusing the more cautious alternatives, Ravi Shankar and George Harrison made their political sympathies unmistakable. This was not simply a humanitarian concert—they did not use only a neutral title—but a cultural intervention into the politics of representation taking against the Bangalee population who are calling their country with a new name. To say "Bangladesh" was to reject the language of Pakistani territorial unity and to acknowledge the legitimacy of Bangalee national self-identification. The choice of name itself carried political weight.

At the same time, Raghavan is careful to show that the older frame had not fully disappeared even then. He points to contemporary television coverage in which people waiting in line for tickets still referred to "East Pakistan," and reporters described the concert as relief for refugee children from the "holocaust in East Pakistan." This detail is important because it shows that the transition in global media language was uneven. The name "Bangladesh" was emerging forcefully, but "East Pakistan" still lingered in public discourse. The struggle over naming was still going on.

The concert itself, however, was unmistakably framed around Bangladesh as a political and humanitarian reality. According to Raghavan, Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan opened with "Bangla Dhun," and Shankar told the audience that although they did not want to "do politics," they wanted people to feel "the agony, and also the pain, and a lot of sad happenings in Bangladesh." George Harrison's song "Bangla Desh" reinforced that naming. For Raghavan,

the effect was clear: audiences came to see that the Bangladesh crisis was not only a humanitarian tragedy but also a political one. The concert did more than simply collecting money for refugees: it helped recast the crisis in the Western cultural imagination.

That is why the emergence of Bangladesh in global media should be understood as a layered process rather than a single moment.

And this shift had profound consequences. Once the conflict was increasingly represented not as unrest in East Pakistan but as the struggle of Bangladesh, the terms of international perception started to shift. Newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, along with broadcasters like the BBC and Voice of America, helped circulate that transformation. The international story changed because the words changed.

The role of global media in 1971 was not limited to reporting facts only. Media shaped the interpretive framework through which those facts were understood. The Liberation War of Bangladesh was not limited to military and political struggle, but also a struggle over naming and legitimacy. "East Pakistan" was the language of state preservation, while the "civil war" frame was the language of diplomatic evasion. "Genocide" was the language of moral recognition of the atrocities happening to the Bangalee population. "Bangladesh" was the language of national emergence. The transformation of East Pakistan into Bangladesh in the global media was historically decisive. Through this transformation, the world came to see that what was unfolding in 1971 was not merely a crisis within Pakistan, but the violent birth of a new nation.

CROSSWORD BY  
THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**  
1 Lebanon trees  
7 Racket  
11 Like lemon juice  
12 Infant's spot  
13 Colombia's capital  
14 Hindu hero  
15 Germany's capital  
17 Whittle down  
20 Fossil resin  
23 Stop N dime  
24 Poster color  
26 Bro's sibling  
27 Little jump  
28 Hosp. workers  
29 Josephine, for one  
31 Tear  
32 Bank subtraction  
33 Potato parts  
34 Steered clear of  
37 Farm unit  
39 Paper worker  
43 Cruise stop  
44 Concert bonus  
45 Stocking stuffers  
46 Touched lightly
- DOWN**  
1 Fare carrier  
2 Green prefix  
3 Use a spade  
4 Sun-dried brick  
5 Ceremony  
6 Fight memento  
7 Be frugal  
8 Reddish fruit  
9 Objective  
10 CEO's deg.  
16 Reading aids  
17 Did some modeling  
18 Cartoon genre  
19 Reddish fruit  
21 Bert's pal  
22 Coarse files  
24 Letter before iota  
25 Dawn goddess  
30 Metal fasteners  
33 Decree  
35 Profound  
36 Writer Buchanan  
37 Fitting  
38 Dove call  
40 Infant  
41 Mine output  
42 Wine choice

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11-22

**WEDNESDAY'S ANSWERS**

B	O	E	R	S		J	U	L	E	P
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OPINION PIECES TO  
dsopinion@gmail.com.

# Sunny-Maati emerge as filmy duo 'Rockstar'

“What touched me the most is that, out of all the people who could have done this job, Rusho thought of me. That really shows the kind of vision he has—and I'm so excited to be a part of it.”

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

This year, singer-songwriter Ahmed Hasan Sunny chose to celebrate his birthday (March 26) by surprising his fans with some exciting news. He will be composing and writing songs for Shakib Khan's upcoming film, *Rockstar*. Fans will also get to hear him sing for the movie.

This project is extra special for Sunny, as his wife, Nusrat Maati, is writing the screenplay, and he shares a long-standing friendship with the film's director, Azman Rusho, a bond that dates back to their early music days. Sunny explains, "Rusho is my friend, and he reached out to me as a friend for *Rockstar*. We've been making music together for a long time. He did hip hop, I was into rock and underground music. We've had a long journey together."

Sunny recalls the moment Rusho called him about the project. "He said, 'Sunny, there's this film I'm doing with Shakib Khan. The movie is called *Rockstar*, and there's no one I can imagine to write the songs.' I was thrilled. Honestly, I never imagined I'd be part of a Shakib Khan film. I'm not a mainstream artiste, so this feels surreal."

He adds, "What touched me the most is that, out of all the people who could have done this job, Rusho thought of me. That really shows the kind of vision he has—and I'm so excited to be a part of it."

Ninety percent of the songs for *Rockstar* have already been recorded, with a total of 8-10 tracks in the film. Audiences can expect to hear a lot of artistes in the movie.

Sunny shares, "I wrote or composed all of the songs. I might sing one or two of them, maybe a few—I can't really say for sure. But Jahid Nirob is handling the overall music production. For all the songs—about eight, nine, maybe ten—I'm either writing the lyrics or composing the music. The rest of the songs might have lyrics by someone else while I compose the music. So, it's a mix: either I wrote, I composed, or did both."

He continues, "There's a romantic track too. Honestly, there's a lot of variety in this project. There are songs by different artistes, and you'll get to hear all of them. As I can't reveal much, I can only share what I'm allowed to. But yes—you'll find romantic songs, rock and roll, and even a folk-type track. There's something for everyone, really."



WHAT'S THE HAPS?

## 'Pulsiraat'

Adapted from *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafani, Prachyanat's *Pulsiraat* traces three displaced men chasing fragile dreams across a brutal desert. Under Kazi Toufikul Islam Emon's direction, the production confronts exile, survival, and human trafficking with stark urgency, turning migration into a haunting, politically charged stage experience.

DATE: SUNDAY | MARCH 29, 2026

TIME: 7 PM ONWARDS

VENUE: EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE HALL, BSA

## Paapa Essiedu as Snape in new 'Harry Potter' teaser: Fans divided

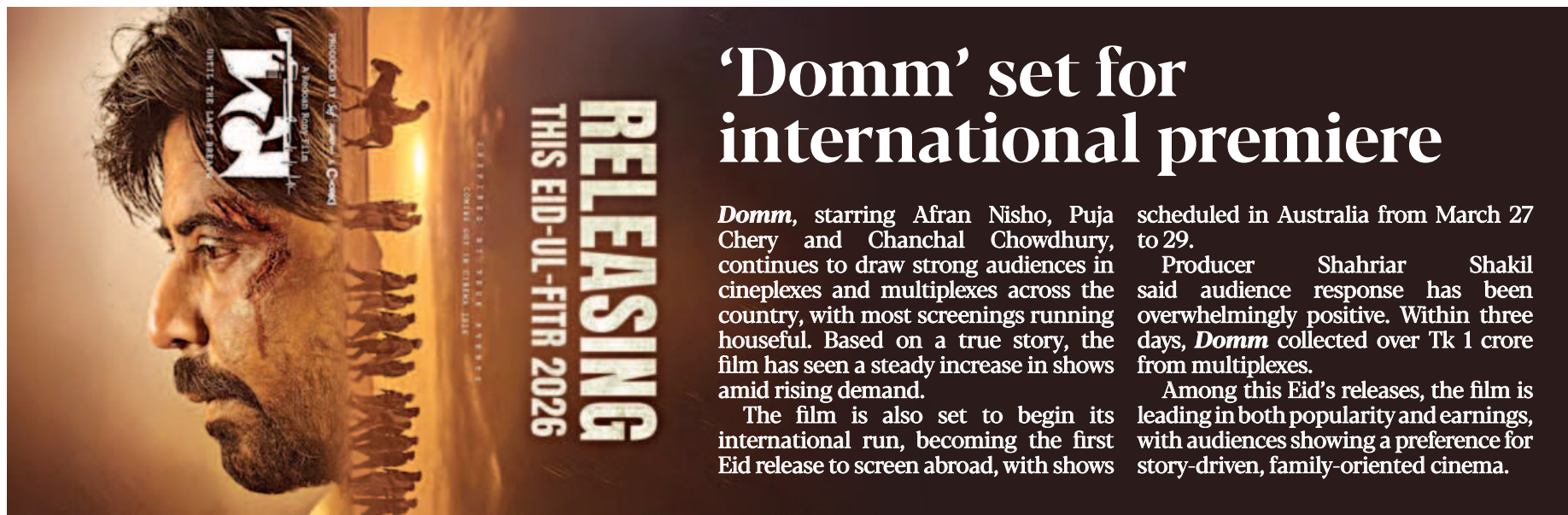


HBO has released the first trailer for its upcoming *Harry Potter* series, generating excitement while also sparking debate online. The controversy centres on Paapa Essiedu's casting as Severus Snape, with some fans questioning the decision based on the character's original description in JK Rowling's books.

While several viewers criticised the casting, others praised the teaser's darker tone and its closer alignment with the source material. Many noted that the extended format could allow for a more detailed adaptation of the books.

Reports also suggest Essiedu has faced racist abuse and threats online following the announcement.

The series aims to faithfully recreate the wizarding world, blending nostalgia with a fresh visual approach for new and longtime audiences.



## 'Domm' set for international premiere

*Domm*, starring Afran Nisho, Puja Chery and Chanchal Chowdhury, continues to draw strong audiences in cineplexes and multiplexes across the country, with most screenings running houseful. Based on a true story, the film has seen a steady increase in shows amid rising demand.

The film is also set to begin its international run, becoming the first Eid release to screen abroad, with shows

scheduled in Australia from March 27 to 29.

Producer Shahriar Shakil said audience response has been overwhelmingly positive. Within three days, *Domm* collected over Tk 1 crore from multiplexes.

Among this Eid's releases, the film is leading in both popularity and earnings, with audiences showing a preference for story-driven, family-oriented cinema.

# NEWS

## Peace talks

FROM PAGE 12  
continue this conflict until energy prices reach uncomfortable levels," Mahony said.

The OECD yesterday cut its eurozone growth outlook and forecast higher inflation for 2026 as energy prices have skyrocketed.

The conflict has also weighed on German consumer sentiment heading into April, a survey showed yesterday, adding to the woes facing Europe's top economy.

France, which holds the G7 Presidency, will on Monday host a meeting bringing together the group's finance ministers, energy ministers and central bank governors.

"Pressure on energy prices, shipping flows and broader financial conditions remains one of the few meaningful sources of leverage (Iran) retains," said Saxo Markets' Charu Chanana.

"There is therefore little incentive to relinquish that leverage prematurely, particularly if market stress strengthens its negotiating position," she added.

The World Trade Organization chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala warned the global trading system is experiencing the "worst disruptions in the past 80 years".

## Nepal panel

FROM PAGE 12  
Lekhakh and the then police chief Chandra Kuber Khapung responsible and said they should be prosecuted. None of them could be immediately reached for comment.

If prosecuted as recommended by the panel, and found guilty by the court, all three could face up to 10 years in jail.

But legal experts said the government must hold criminal investigations before formally charging them in court.

"It is not a charge sheet and they cannot be jailed on the basis of this report," said Dinesh Tripathi, a senior independent lawyer.

"There has to be a criminal investigation by police ... The government can file the case in the court only after that," he said, adding that the process could take at least a couple of months.

Analysts say whether or not to take forward the recommendations is the responsibility of Shah, 35, and his Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP).

## Violence against journalists in DR Congo rising: RSF

AFP, Kinshasa

Journalists have faced increasing violence and pressure amid the escalating conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said yesterday.

The Rwanda-backed M23 armed group has seized large swathes of territory in the eastern part of the DRC since 2021.

The region is rich in natural resources and has been ravaged by conflict for the past 30 years.

The M23, known for its silencing of dissenting voices, captured the major cities of Goma in January 2025 and Bukavu in February 2025, setting up a parallel administration in those areas.

"All of the journalists in eastern DRC interviewed by RSF report that since the capture of Goma in January 2025, their working methods have radically changed," RSF said.

"At least eight journalists have been detained by M23 or by the military intelligence services of the regular army for several days," RSF added.

## Request has been made

FROM PAGE 12

However, Philip Sangma, who was arrested for allegedly helping the two accused flee in the Hadi murder case, has been sent to judicial custody by a court order.

Faisal and Alamgir were detained on March 8 in the Bangoon area near the Bangladesh-India border by the West Bengal Police's Special Task Force.

After being arrested on charges of illegal entry, the two were taken on a 14-day remand for questioning. When they were produced before the court after the remand ended, the court on March 22 ordered that they be sent to judicial custody for 12 days.

While being taken to court that day, Faisal told reporters: "I did not do this. I was not involved in these acts."

When journalists asked whether he had been framed, he avoided answering the question, the report said.

Referring to the events of 1971,

Two journalists were locked up by M23 in containers converted into jails, where up to 80 detainees are crammed together, according to a report published by RSF on Tuesday.

The M23 has also imposed "ideological training" on at least four journalists, censored programmes on local radio stations, and forced certain shows or talking points onto them.

Meanwhile, the government has accused journalists "of belonging to the M23 camp and its ally, Rwanda", the report said.

The DRC's High Council for Audiovisual and Communication (CSAC) has controlled the narrative on the war and "regularly takes decisions that increasingly resemble censorship," RSF said.

The capture of Goma also "marked an intensification of disinformation" by both sides, the NGO added.

Around 90 journalists from the South Kivu and North Kivu provinces were forced to flee their homes between 2023 and early 2025, according to the National Union of the Congolese Press.

Salahuddin said the first massacre of March 25 began at Rajarbagh Police Lines, which paved the way for the declaration of independence.

Ziaur Rahman, then a major, revolted in Chattogram after learning about the atrocities and later announced the country's independence from the Kalurghat Radio Station on March 27, calling for global support.

Remembering fallen police personnel, Salahuddin said the sacrifices at Rajarbagh marked the beginning of the call for independence.

He also described the resumption of the Independence Day parade after several years as a positive development and expressed hope that democratic practices would continue in line with the aspirations of the martyrs.

On police reform, he said discussions are underway with several developed countries for technical support, training and capacity building.

## College student shot dead

FROM PAGE 12

of helmeted youths arrived on three motorcycles, Prothom Alo reported. Identifying themselves as police, they chased Hamza.

As he ran towards the bank of a nearby canal, the attackers at one point shot him in the head and fled the scene.

Adil SP Shamim said the body was sent to Bagerhat District Hospital for autopsy.

Contacted, Bagerhat Superintendent of Police Mohammad Hasan Chowdhury told The Daily Star that Hamza was an accused in a murder case, and police are also looking into that matter.

## Govt approves

FROM PAGE 12

Resources Division to meet emergency fuel needs.

The high-powered panel approved, in principle, the direct procurement of 100,000 tonnes of diesel from AP Energy Investments Ltd through direct purchase. It also approved the purchase of 200,000 tonnes of diesel from Superstar International (Group) Ltd under the same method.

## Ex-DGFI chief Mamun Khaled on remand

FROM PAGE 12

Faruqi alleged that shots were fired at protesters on Khaled's orders.

He also questioned Khaled's role during the 2007-08 army-backed caretaker rule, accusing him of detaining and torturing political leaders and businesspeople.

Faruqi further alleged Khaled's involvement in enforced disappearances and torture at secret detention facilities known as "Aynaghar", politicising the DGFI, and playing a role in evicting former BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia from her cantonment residence.

Defence counsel Nazrul Islam Khan sought bail, arguing Khaled had no involvement in the killing.

Speaking in court, Khaled denied the allegations, saying he had no authority during the July 2024 protests and was living as a civilian in DOHS at the time.

"I was in favour of the July

## UN declares African slave trade humanity's gravest crime

AFP, United Nations

The UN General Assembly on Wednesday designated the transatlantic African slave trade as "the gravest crime against humanity," despite opposition by the United

States and some European countries.

In a move advocates hailed as a step towards healing and possible reparations, the resolution was adopted to applause by a vote of 123 in favor, three against and 52 abstentions.

## Liberation War

FROM PAGE 2

liberation forces could rise again if people remain inactive.

He also said various benefits and welfare measures for freedom fighters were introduced during the tenure of former prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

The minister also said fuel, which used to last two days at the pumps, is now running out within just two hours. "Where is this fuel going? No one will be allowed to siphon it off," he said, urging the administration to remain vigilant on this matter.

Chaired by Deputy Commissioner Aminul Islam, the event was also addressed by Police Superintendent Saiful Islam Santu and district BNP

vice-president and convener of Jatiyatabadi Muktiyoddha Dal Azizur Rahman Dulal.

Deputy Director of Local Government Division Kamrul Islam, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Ganapati Roy, Sirajganj Municipality administrator Shahadat Hossain, Civil Surgeon Nurul Amin, district BNP general secretary Saidur Rahman Bacchu, former commanders of district and upazila freedom fighter commands, women freedom fighters, and officials of different administrative bodies were present.

Freedom fighters were accorded a reception and honoured with crests at the programme.

uprising," Khaled told the court.

He also defended his past role, claiming no enforced disappearances took place during his tenure and that he had cooperated with relevant commissions investigating such allegations.

Khaled further said that he joined the Forces Signal Intelligence Bureau of the DGFI in 2007, which primarily handled communications, and later took over broader responsibilities within the agency.

"I personally called the judges in all the cases in which the Prime Minister [Tarique Rahman] was granted bail at that time. Clearances were given from our side in each of those instances," he said.

After hearing both sides, the court rejected the bail plea and granted a five-day remand for interrogation.

Khaled served as a director of DGFI from December 2007 to December 2010 and as the director general from

June 2011 to March 2013.

Detective Branch officials said he is being questioned over multiple allegations, including enforced disappearances, illegal detention facilities, surveillance of opposition figures, and financial irregularities linked to the Jolshiri housing project.

The disappearance of BNP leader Chowdhury Alam during Khaled's tenure is also under scrutiny.

DB earlier arrested another key figure of the caretaker government, Lt Gen (retd) Masud Uddin Chowdhury, in a separate case involving human trafficking and document forgery.

Though arrested in different cases, intelligence sources said both are being interrogated over their roles during the 2007-08 caretaker period.

DB chief Shafiqul Islam told The Daily Star that the two are being questioned over the cases against them, while other allegations are also being examined.

## NEWS

Swechchasebak  
Dal man stabbed  
to death in Bogura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A local Swechchasebak Dal activist was stabbed to death by unidentified assailants in Sariakandi upazila of Bogura on Wednesday night.

The deceased Zakaria Shayan, 28, a resident of Jorgachha village in the upazila, was a businessman at Jorgachha market and an active member of Sariakandi upazila unit Swechchasebak Dal.

The incident occurred around 8:00pm in the Velabari Union Bazar area.

"Shayan had gone to the Togar Sawmill area in Jorgachha Purba Para when some unidentified individuals stabbed him. Informed, we rushed him to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead around 9:00pm. We are unaware of him having any prior disputes with anyone," said his uncle Lutlar Haidar Rumin.

Mustafizur Rahman Sumon, office secretary of Bogura District Swechchasebak Dal, confirmed that Shayan was an activist in Sariakandi upazila unit.

Lalan Hossain, assistant sub-inspector of Chilimpur Medical Outpost, said the victim sustained a stab wound below his chest and died on the way to the hospital.

AFM Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Sariakandi Police Station, said the body has been handed over to the family following an autopsy.

"The family of the deceased has yet to lodge a complaint with police, and no arrests have been made so far," he added.



Zakaria Shayan



PHOTO: STAR

## BL COLLEGE IN KHULNA

Students suffer as dorms  
stay shut for 18 months

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Students of Government Brajalal College in Khulna have long been grappling with a severe accommodation crisis as all five dormitories for male students have remained closed for the past 18 months.

Also known as BL College, the institution, established in 1902, is one of the oldest centres of higher education in the greater Khulna region.

The shutdown followed political interference, vandalism, and prolonged delays in renovation, forcing many students to stay in unsafe or costly private lodgings.

Despite having more than 33,000 students across higher secondary, undergraduate, and postgraduate programmes, the college can accommodate barely around 2 percent of them, with only 721 hostel seats available across eight dormitories – five for male students and three for female students.

While most of the halls were already in a shabby state, the situation worsened further since August 5, 2024, when all five male dormitories were shut down following vandalism and looting.

College authorities, however, repeatedly cited ongoing renovation as the reason for keeping the halls closed, but little progress has been visible on the ground.

Visiting the campus recently, this correspondent observed that Shahid Titumir Hall has become severely dilapidated, with structural risks making it unfit for accommodation.

Kabi Nazrul and Sobodh Chandra halls were also seen in dire condition.

Doors and windows are broken, plaster is peeling off the walls and ceilings, and overgrown bushes have taken over the compound. Inside, rooms and furniture lie vandalised, with debris scattered across the floors.

Only two male dormitories – Haji Mohsin and Dr Zoha halls – reportedly underwent minor repairs and fresh coats of paint recently, but they are still closed to students.

In contrast, the three female dormitories – Begum Khaleda Zia, Begum Monnujan, and Begum Fazilatunnesa halls – were seen functioning to some extent, accommodating a limited number of students. Although no one stayed in these halls immediately after

from campus housing has disrupted academic routines, increased expenses, and heightened security concerns.

Sabbir Ahmed, a third year student of the Mathematics department, said many students have been under immense pressure as they have to travel long distances to attend classes regularly under the present circumstances.

"We went to the principal and requested repeatedly to reopen the halls, to no avail," he added.

Echoing him, Titash Chakrabarty, another student, urged the authorities to allocate dormitory seats to students based on merit, distance, and economic hardship once the halls are reopened.



the August 5 political changeover in 2024, female students gradually began returning, prompting the college administration to reopen them partially.

With all male dormitories closed, students from Bagerhat, Satkhira, Jashore, Narail, Kushtia, and other districts across Khulna division have been hit the hardest. Many have taken shelter in crowded messes, rented shared rooms, or makeshift accommodations, often without adequate security and amid poor living conditions and high costs.

Students say the sudden shift away



According to the college authorities, the halls were already suffering from severe mismanagement and political dominance. Then the chaos following the political changeover led to further disorder and widespread vandalism, forcing the halls to shut down.

Prof Anwarul Kadir, an educationalist and civil society member, called for renovation of the existing halls and construction of new ones to match the institution's massive student population.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Plastic waste  
clogs Jamal  
Khan canal

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

The Jamal Khan canal, a waterway running through Chattogram city and vital for drainage, has become clogged with a thick layer of plastic and polythene waste.

Residents and experts warn that if the debris is not removed immediately, it could trigger severe waterlogging in the coming monsoon.

The canal originates in the Kazir Dewri area and flows through Jamal Khan, Hem Sen Lane, Rahmatganj, and Dewan Bazar before merging with the Chaktai canal.

Abdul Malek, a local resident, alleged that the Chattogram City Corporation's conservancy workers do not clean the canal regularly, allowing plastic waste to pile up over the years.

Shatodal Barua, another local resident, however, blamed residents for indiscriminately dumping household trash in polythene bags directly into the canal.

Pranab Kanti Sharma, CCC's deputy chief conservancy officer, said, "We clean the canal regularly, but people start dumping plastic waste again the very next day."



The scale of the problem was highlighted in a 2022 study by the Civil Engineering Department of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET). Pial Barua and Al Amin, two students of the department, presented the study findings at the Chattogram Press Club on September 10, 2022.

The research, supervised by Prof Dr Swapan Kumar Palit, revealed that while the city generates around 249 tonnes of plastic and polythene waste, CCC workers collect only 109 tonnes, leaving 140 tonnes to end up in drains and canals.

Prof Swapan said the lack of dustbins and poor public awareness were major factors. He also lamented the lack of enforcement of the Mandatory Jute Packaging Act, 2010.

"Around 90% of grocery bags are still made of polythene," he said, calling for mobile courts to enforce the law.

New research offers a potential way to repurpose the waste. Shovon Halder, an assistant professor of the department, recently completed a study titled "Performance of pervious asphalt pavement using waste polyethylene modified binder", which found that mixing 4% melted polythene waste with bitumen during road construction can increase the longevity of road pavements by 30% during the monsoon.

"We should seriously consider reusing polythene waste in road construction to solve the two problems at once," Shovon said.

Dhaka urges  
action against  
slavery, oppression

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman has called for intensified global efforts to confront slavery and oppression, urging renewed international action while addressing a UN General Assembly commemorative meeting.

He made the call while speaking at a meeting marking the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade at the United Nations headquarters in New York on Wednesday, according to a message received by BSS yesterday morning.

The foreign minister paid solemn tribute to the millions of victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade and honoured the courageous resilience of those who resisted it.

Describing the transatlantic slave trade as a permanent scar on humanity, Dr Rahman reaffirmed Bangladesh's firm stance against slavery, apartheid, genocide and all forms of oppression.

He said the Constitution of Bangladesh rejects imperialism, colonialism, racism and discrimination, reiterating the country's solidarity with oppressed peoples worldwide.

Recalling the centenary of the 1926 Slavery Convention and nearly 80 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, he noted that although slavery has been abolished, its legacy persists in modern society, economy and politics, with various forms still existing worldwide.

Devotees take part in  
Ashtami Snan ritual

SDILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Thousands of devotees from the Hindu community yesterday gathered on the sandy shoals within the Brahmaputra river in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila for the 'Ashtami Snan' – a ritual dip in the river.

Since the dawn, the pilgrims converged on shoal areas amid chants, prayers, and spiritual fervour.

The upazila administration arranged designated bathing sites to facilitate orderly participation in the ritual.

For Hindu community members, Ashtami Snan – often revered as Punya Snan – is a deeply spiritual act symbolising cleansing of sins and purification of the soul through immersion in the Brahmaputra's sacred waters on this auspicious day, to usher in divine blessings, inner peace, and spiritual renewal.

Pilgrims from across Bangladesh take part in the ritual, traditionally held during the Bangla month of

Chaitra or the first week of Baishakh.

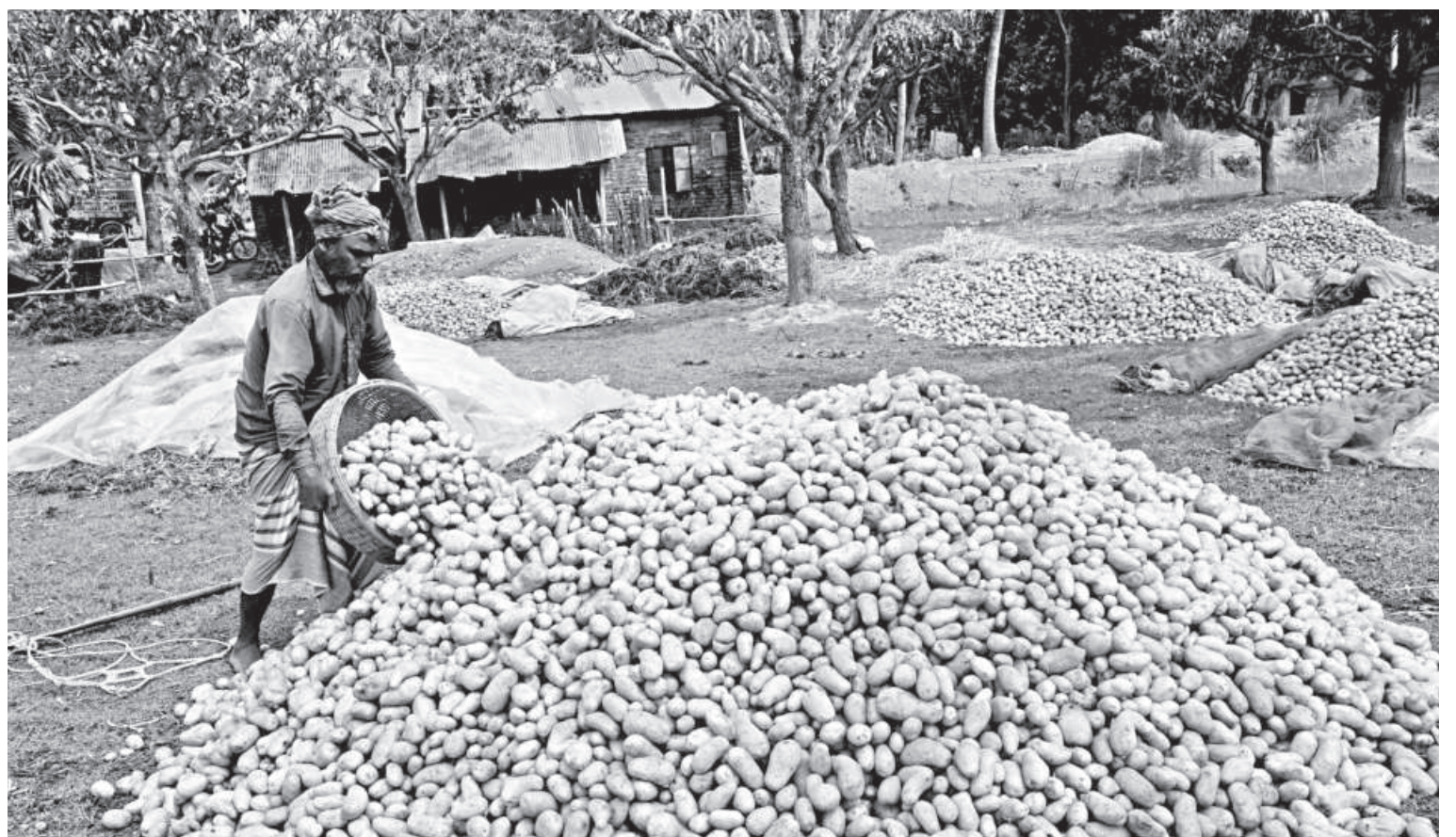
"The Ashtami Snan is believed to wash away sins and bring in a deep sense of inner peace," said Ramesh Chandra Das, 70, from Rangpur.

Nagendra Nath Barman, 75, a pilgrim from Chilmari, said, "On this day, the waters of the Ganges and of the Brahmaputra merge to form a holy confluence that brings purification and peace."

"Devotees come to offer prayers and perform Pind Daan for their ancestors on this sacred occasion," said Kanai Chakrabarty, a priest.

Sachindra Nath Barman, president of Chilmari upazila Puja Uddapan Parishad, said around three lakh devotees annually participate in the three-century-old festival.

Chilmari UNO Mahmudul Hasan said law enforcers were deployed to ensure safety and smooth management, and fire service personnel remained on standby, while more than 200 volunteers assisted in crowd management.



Farmers have been harvesting potatoes in large quantities in Mahakundu village of Mohanpur upazila in Rajshahi since the day after Eid-ul-Fitr. Farmers said potatoes were being piled under trees or stored in cold storage as they intended to sell them once prices rise. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## Hatirjheel OC, ASI 3,500 homes, crops on 4,043

FROM PAGE 4

A video circulating on social media on Friday, the day before Eid-ul-Fitr, shows a group of traders forcing the Nobin Fashion outlet to shut, alleging that its low-priced panjabis were hurting their business and likening the sale to "relief distribution".

Nobin authorities alleged that police present at the scene did not intervene and instead

appeared to side with the traders.

The incident triggered widespread criticism online, with many users backing the brand's pricing and calling for action against those involved.

A Dhaka court yesterday expressed dissatisfaction over the police's role, summoned the Hatirjheel OC, and ordered that the showroom be reopened within 24 hours.

FROM PAGE 4

in the village are now living under the open sky.

Nitesh Chandra Barman of Dholahat village said he cultivated onion seed on one bigha, spending about Tk 2 lakh, but the hailstorm caused severe damage to the plants, leaving him with no way to recover the production cost or repay the loans and dues for fertilisers.

Md Alamgir Kabir,

additional deputy director (crop) of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Thakurgaon, said crops on about 4,043 hectares, including maize on around 2,000 hectares and potato on 257 hectares, were damaged in the recent spell of nor'westers, hailstorms, and heavy rain.

A list of affected farmers is being prepared, and necessary steps will be taken following

instructions from higher authorities, he added.

Ishrat Farzana, deputy commissioner of Thakurgaon, said a list of the affected households is being prepared, after which an allocation will be sought from the Directorate of Relief and Disaster Management.

"Once the allocation is received, assistance will be provided to the affected people," she added.



BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

# The spiritual anatomy of womanhood and folk

Review of Nasrin Khandoker's 'Songs of Desire and Defiance: Subjectivity, Emotions, and Authenticity in Bhawaiya Folk Songs of North Bengal' (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2026)

SUMAIYA TASNIM

In the early 2000s, remixed versions of Bangla folk songs flooded neighbourhood corners during evening street matches and nighttime ceremonial events, which blurred the elusive nature of melancholia and yearning in the beats and celebration. This resulted in divided reactions as some debated the gentrification of pastoral identity and others applauded the defiance of conservative norms.

Khandoker's *Songs of Desire and Defiance* (slated to be published in June, 2026) is a deep dive into the Bhawaiya folk tradition of North Bengal; research ranging from studying the history of India to Bangladesh through ethnomusicology, feminist anthropology, and cultural studies. The text illuminates the nature of Bhawaiya lyrics and speaks for women's desire, longing, and dissatisfactions of conjugal life under the restrictions of the patriarch. It revives Bhawaiya folk lyrics across chapters and amidst sections that make one reach out to their old playlist on YouTube.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

**After the 1947 Partition, Bhawaiya music entered the andarmahal of Hindu and Muslim elites through gramophone records and transcended the boundaries between the lower class fields and the upper class living rooms. Following this partition, the areas of Bhawaiya in North Bengal were also divided by religious sentiment.**

While Bhawaiya belongs to the larger constellations of folk genres and shares inclinations with Bhatiali and Baul music, its distinctiveness lies broadly with the articulation of subjectivity on womanhood. Popularised by Abbasuddin Ahmed, Bhawaiya music is a blend of yearning and loss symbolised with the ebb and flow of river waves. The unsynchronised nature of the summer breeze presents an ecocentric resilience to the Bangla identity.

Dividing the book into four chapters, the author outlines her

discourse through ethnocentric research and lyrical analysis across Cooch Behar, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Ulipur, and Chilmari. The book asserts that the musicality of Bhawaiya sentiment is shaped less by geographical constraints and more by linguistics, history and cultural formations. She situates Bengal's colonial and nationalist history whilst exploring Hindu mythological and theological metaphors in lyrics to navigate how identities are constructed and contested by placing women's position at the centre of negotiations.

In the first two chapters, Khandoker combines colonial historical ideologies and Hindu mythological metaphors, aligning with the lived reality of women. The history of Bhawaiya is a foundation of Bengali nationalism and religious identity that traces with the emergence of the bhodrolok culture. This 'Bengaliness' later became a form of anticolonial resistance through literature but excluded religious diversity with the birth of "Hindutva". The othering of Muslim identity in the nationalist discourse emerged as a

form of new Muslim identity, and under these romanticised formations, the elite Bengali literary class reinvented the "ghor/bahir" spheres. The men believed in adopting the Western materialised identity for the public sphere, but the Eastern spiritual identity was to be protected in private by women. This "new woman" evidently became bearers of religious purity and the image of nationhood.

Under surveillance of patriarchal control, the author questions whether love only existed in an arranged matrimony or whether it remains vigilant in the educated discourse for conjugal life. Folk products such as doggrels, poems, and songs by Bhawaiya challenged such elite discourses of repressed desires of love. However, the folk expressions were derailed as low class emotions, ultimately othering the bhodrolok sentiment. The resilience through Bhawaiya music continued as the public sphere became more inclusive towards the lower-class women.

After the 1947 Partition, Bhawaiya music entered the andarmahal of

Hindu and Muslim elites through gramophone records and transcended the boundaries between the lower class fields and the upper class living rooms. Following this partition, the areas of Bhawaiya in North Bengal were also divided by religious sentiment.

The text questions whose voice of desire the songs are presented as the discussion surrounding authorship becomes difficult to navigate. Locating various Bhawaiya scholars and musicians, the author traced the notion that the lyrics are an idea of "male fantasy of women" written by men, but following interviews with women Bhawaiya musicians, it was conclusive that whoever makes a Bhawaiya song, whether a man or a woman often tries to replicate the style of feminine struggles orientated around despair, yearning and rage. Some lyrics written by women are sung as homage to their mothers, sisters, and friendships. The melodious metaphors in Abbasuddin Ahmed's "O ki Ekbar Ashiya" is set on yearning for a lover while evoking the caged anxiety in a forcefully arranged marriage with a deeper narrative of

societal subjugation of consent and lack of agency.

The author pictures the metaphor of the Hindu goddess, Lakshmi, who is known as the "ideal wife" from the bhodrolok's perspective. She is an empathetic, all-forgiving, sacrificing deity whose image resembles an ideal nationalist spirituality. She is the lokkhi, and any figure that would defy that image is alokkhi.

The dangerous woman in Bhawaiya challenges the assumptions of "lokkhi", a poor and voiceless soul. The deviant desire in Bangla folk makes the author ask one fundamental question that encapsulates her research objective: Is one a woman of Bhawaiya or do they become a woman of Bhawaiya? The author believes that it occurs when the listeners move beyond a gendered perspective and transform themselves into a temporal female subjectivity.

The remixed versions of Bhawaiya music produced by high class composers create tensions with marketing when they supersede class confidentiality. The author quotes this as "a new form of old bhodrolok" tension. These transformative pop folk versions have created a space for expressing defiant and deviant emotions, challenging middle-class perceptions of spirituality and decency. Somewhere along the line, it has also reduced the resilient empowering of female singers as invisible products.

Nasrin Khandoker's research is inspired by the subaltern studies and the nostalgic memories of her childhood that are etched with the subliminal tunes of Bhawaiya. The discourse of sensuality and romance is a timely burning issue in the scholarly investigation which her book intends to approach. This book creates a scholarly quest to deconstruct feminine agency and "deviance" as a form of defiance. In a world where oppression is systemic and an easier option to choose for the powerful, it is through art that resilience stands as a protest that threatens those who ritualistically choose to silence others.

Sumaiya Tasnim is a lecturer at the Department of English and Humanities, BRAC University.

BOOK REVIEW: POETRY

# The spark of 'Red Spark'

Review of 'Red Spark' (Creative Dhaka Publication, 2025) by an Alliance of M & N

ABDUS SELIM

Though human beings speak in prose in everyday life, the astonishing truth is that poetry is humanity's first artistic love. In the 16th century, the English poet and writer Philip Sidney said that poetry was the first of the arts, coming before philosophy and history. In other words, the artistic journey of human civilisation began with poetry. Yet the irony is that poetry has no fixed definition—and perhaps that is why everyone loves poetry, and in one way or another, everyone attempts to write it. Although Jibanananda Das famously said that not everyone is a poet, only some are, he could not clearly define the essential elements that transform a piece of writing into poetry. What he did say was this: In the poet's heart, there must be imagination, and within that imagination must exist a distinctiveness of thought and experience. However, Jibanananda never fully explained the nature of imaginative genius itself.

We know imagination does not arise solely from romantic love; many different sources and materials may shape it. And it is the work of this kind of romantic imagination that forms this English poetry collection, *Red Spark*, by the secretive alliance between M & N.

When I first held this book in my hands, the thought that arose immediately was this: beauty has no boundary, no line that says this far and no further; this is the height of aesthetics, and none may go beyond it. The book's production is beautiful in every sense and deeply pleasing to the eye. Not only that, it is also reader-friendly, because the very elegance of its design draws one instinctively toward reading, especially due to its cover, its abstract ornamentation, and its tasteful harmony of colors.

The book is titled *Red Spark*. I am, by training, a student of literature, but



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

professionally a teacher of linguistics. Therefore, I would like to reflect briefly on the linguistic significance of this title. One important area of linguistics is the semantics of colour, the inherent meanings associated with colors, a concept present since the earliest days of human civilisation. Different colors have long been used as symbols of different meanings.

So what does red mean? Linguistics tells us that red is often associated with passion, energy, and action. Red can evoke strong emotions such as love and anger—two extremes of human feelings. Red carries additional meanings as well. It is used as a warning signal for danger—and in that sense, love itself can be a sign of danger. Another word in the title is *Spark*. The collocation of red with spark is itself a domain of linguistics, for collocation concerns how words naturally intertwine with one another. Let us then consider the

meaning of "spark". Semantically, a spark is a very small burning fragment that flies out from a fire. Naturally, if red signifies love or passion, then fire must exist, and fire never exists without leaving something to burn.

That the poetry book is essentially about love is affirmed by the title of its Preface, "The Journey of Love". I was particularly moved by the final sentence of that Preface: "The Journey of Love is more than a collection of poems—it is a love letter written in fragments of the soul, a map of longing traced across the heart, and a reminder that even when love can no longer be spoken, it continues to live, endlessly, within us". In my view, perhaps that continuous state of living within us is precisely the burning fragment—the spark that flies out of love.

In this context, my thoughts inevitably turn to Pablo Neruda whenever love poetry is mentioned. *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* (1924) comes unbidden to mind,

where he writes: "love is short but forgetting is long." And thus, love transcends into an "eternal journey". That's why the writers of the present love poems of *Red Spark*, an Alliance of M & N, say: "Love does not vanish—it only changes form, waiting to be seen again, in a glance, a touch, a forgotten smile."

The collection contains 22 poems, each exploring different phases of love. There is the infinity of love, the pledge of devotion to the beloved, the purity of love, its wonder, separation, depth, measurement, blindness, and recklessness. These are, undeniably, the timeless dimensions by which love has always been understood. But beyond all this, the collection also speaks of love's hunger, the body's longing, the desire for touch, and at this very point, I am reminded of Neruda's line from his *Love Poems*: "Body of

the collection takes its name: "Your beauty, your charm, / Your captivating smile, and touch of your deep eyes— / They awakened a feeling in my heart, / Like a sudden flash of red lighting across the sky."

"Longing Across the Miles" echoes the same emotion: "Not seen you for so, so long, / yet in my heart, you still belong, / I dream of you all the time, / your voice, your smile, your gentle rhyme." The final poem of the collection speaks of physical experience: "When I touch you, my whole body trembles, / As love speaks silently, / Your breath stops at the touch of my fingers, / My heart sways to the melody of your heart."

Notably, *Red Spark* reveals a blending and coexistence of the physical and the metaphysical. Just as M & N echo John Donne in proclaiming the sovereignty of love: "Busy old fool, unruly Sun, / Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere; / This bed thy center is, there walls thy sphere"; they also speak, like Neruda, with elemental force: "My savage peasant body digs through you / and makes the son leap from the depth of the earth."

Yet the poem that touched me most deeply is "I Love to Love You: I Live to Love You":

"I love to love you— / like the dawn loves the first golden light, / like the stars love the velvet night, / Every heartbeat sings a single tune, / a melody that begins and ends with you. . . . I love to love you— / for loving you is my sweetest art, / I live to love you— / for you are the very beat of my heart."



Thus, one may conclude, echoing the Preface of the collection: "Love is eternal—a quiet miracle that drifts through time, changing its form but never losing its power."

Abdus Selim is an eminent academic and translator. He can be reached at selim70plus@gmail.com.

**So what does red mean? Linguistics tells us that red is often associated with passion, energy, and action. Red can evoke strong emotions such as love and anger—two extremes of human feelings. Red carries additional meanings as well. itself can be a sign of danger.**

woman, white hills, white thighs, / you look like the world in your posture of surrender." Similarly, the alliance of M & N speaks of bodily desire: "I crave your face, your voice, your hair, / Silent and starving, I wander the streets, / Bread cannot feed me..." Or the poem "Red Spark" itself, from which

**76 DAYS TO GO**

**76 and counting for Brazil**

Brazil hold the record for the most wins in World Cup history, having secured a total of 76 victories, with Carlo Ancelotti's side looking to go further up this table in the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Meanwhile, Germany follow Brazil closely in second place with 68 wins. Among the other world champions, Argentina have recorded 47 wins, Italy 45, and France 39. The list is rounded out by England with 32 wins, Spain with 31, and Uruguay with 25.

**\*\* Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'The day football died'**



## SPORTS CAN BRING HONOUR TO THE NATION: PM

As per tradition, the sporting community of the country observed the 56th Independence Day yesterday, with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and his daughter Zaima Rahman attending an exhibition football match between former national players -- divided into Red and Green teams -- at the National Stadium in Dhaka. The PM also received a commemorative jersey from former national goalkeeper and now State Minister for Youth and Sports Aminul Haque, who also participated in the match. Speaking on the occasion, the PM urged a vibrant sports culture. "I believe that sports can bring honour to the nation and are capable of creating a beautiful bond of friendship and brotherhood among us," he said. Meanwhile, former Bangladesh cricketer Mohammad Rafique rolled back the years at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur, guiding BCB Red to a commanding victory over BCB Green with an all-round performance in an exhibition cricket match.

PHOTO: BCB/BFF

## Prominent hockey figure Ripon no more

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Zaki Ahmed Ripon, a prominent figure in Bangladesh hockey as both a player and administrator, died of cardiac arrest yesterday. He was 63.

He fell ill with chest pain in the early hours and was taken to a city hospital, where he later passed away. He is survived by his wife, two daughters and numerous well-wishers.

Ripon, who represented Abahani during the 1980s, remained closely associated with the club long after his playing days and was serving as secretary of its hockey committee at the time of his death. He also held senior roles within the sport's administration, including vice-president and joint secretary of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF), and was an executive member of the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA).

His namaz-e-janaza was held at Dhanmondi's Modhubagh Mosque and at the Abahani Club premises before burial at Rayerbazar graveyard.

Tributes were paid by the BHF, the BOA, Mohammedan SC and other sporting bodies, who expressed their condolences to his family.

## Vietnam too strong for Bangladesh

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Bangladesh suffered a comprehensive 3-0 defeat to Vietnam in a FIFA friendly in Hanoi yesterday, as they continue preparations for their AFC Asian Cup Group 31 clash against hosts Singapore.

All three goals came in the first half. Phan Tuan Hai, Pham Xuan Manh and Nguyen Hai Long each found the net within the opening 40 minutes, highlighting the technical and tactical superiority of Vietnam, who are ranked 103rd in the world -- 78 places above Bangladesh.

The men in red and green, who had also lost to the same opponents twice during the 2002 World Cup qualifiers in Dammam, struggled to cope with the pace and precision of the home side.

However, Spanish coach Javier Cabrera's charges dominated possession early at the National Stadium, but they were soon chasing shadows. Vietnam's crisp passing with rapid attacks down both flanks repeatedly tested Bangladesh's Topu Barman-less backline, while the absence of suspended midfielder Rakib Hossain had limited their threat in the final third.

Vietnam's pressure told early. Tuan Hai guided a deep corner from Thuong Tien Anh into the net in the eighth minute, while Thuong and midfielder Nguyen



Quang Hai kept Bangladeshi defenders on their toes. In the 18th minute, left-back Xuan Manh rose to meet a Quang Hai free-kick, doubling the lead, after goalkeeper Mehedi Hasan Srabon had tipped a powerful Nguyen Hoang Duc shot over the bar. Hai Long then added a third in the 38th minute, leaving Srabon disappointed as he could have done better after a couple of good saves.

The second half allowed both sides to rotate squads ahead of the Asian Cup tie. Bangladesh fielded lit again Bishwanath Ghosh, Emon Shahriar and Jamal Bhuiyan, and enjoyed better possession late on. Hamza Chowdhury nearly scored from a Suman Reza flick, while Bangladesh survived late scares as substitutes Nguyen Xuan Son and Pham Gia Hung struck the post twice in the dying minutes.

### SHORT CORNER

**BCB unfazed by directors' exits as door remains open for Mashrafe: Faruque**

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) vice-president Faruque Ahmed said yesterday that the board would not 'stop functioning' even though two of its directors recently resigned amid the ongoing crisis faced by the Aminul Islam Bulbul-led board. He also acknowledged former skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's contributions to Bangladesh cricket and said that, if there are no legal issues, Mashrafe will be able to come to the board.

**India to end home season with five Australia Tests**

India will host Australia in a high-profile five-Test series starting January next year to end the 2026/27 home season, the country's cricket board announced on Thursday. "The season will culminate with the prestigious and much-anticipated Border-Gavaskar Trophy, featuring a five-match Test series against Australia, beginning on January 21, 2027, in Nagpur," the Board of Control for Cricket in India said.

**Asian Cup draw postponed as Middle East conflict continues**

The draw for January's Asian Cup final, which was due to be held in Riyadh on April 11, has been postponed, the Asian Football Confederation announced on Thursday. Officials have rescheduled the event to a later date "to ensure the undisrupted attendance of all stakeholders at the final draw ceremony," the governing body said in a statement.

**\*\*Read full stories on The Daily Star website**

## Ashrafal keen to 'test bench strength' in NZ T20Is

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Bangladesh are set to inject fresh blood into their T20I squad for the upcoming series against New Zealand, running from April 27 to May 2, according to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) sources.

With six of their players, including pace spearhead Mustafizur Rahman, engaged in the 2026 Pakistan Super League and exempted from the series, it might open the door for another pacer to stake a claim.

Batting coach Mohammad Ashrafal welcomed the prospect of giving opportunities to emerging talent when established players are unavailable due to franchise commitments, injuries, or personal reasons.

"Definitely. I would say, regarding the last two boards, since Faruque [Ahmed] bhai and [Aminul Islam] Bulbul bhai arrived, their thinking is a bit different," he told reporters after the Independence Day Exhibition match at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday.

"Previously, the situation was that we brought Mustafizur back from Chennai [Super Kings] to play against Zimbabwe and didn't let him play the knockout match. Now, however, this isn't happening.

"If you look at the series we lost against the United Arab Emirates, Mustafizur wasn't there because of the Indian Premier League. So,



this is a positive side... and we haven't done this before, but now we are doing it, and this is how it should be," he said on BCB's stance of allowing cricketers to thrive in franchise leagues despite the national team's series.

"We might not always have every player available; there could be injuries or family issues, and at those times another player should be given the opportunity. I don't know the lengths of the PSL NOCs, but if a new player gets a chance, it will be an opportunity for them and for us to test bench strength," added the former Bangladesh captain.

Pacer Ripon Mondol or all-rounder Abdul Gallar Saqlain, who have appeared in the Asia Cup Rising Stars tournament, will be in the selectors' radar for the New Zealand T20Is. Meanwhile, pacers Tanzim Sakib and Hasan Mahmud have recovered from injury issues, according to BCB medical department officials.

Ashrafal divulged that players from all three formats will be starting the camp on Friday.

"We will be starting with fitness and fielding, and the initial phase will be from [March] 27 to April 2. Then there are gaps on 3rd and 4th before the skill camp begins. There were tight schedules in the BPL, and after that in Odommo Cup, BCL, and then the Pakistan series. Since we have got some time [before New Zealand ODI], we will be doing work on fitness and fielding for a week. The Test and white-ball players will be there, and all the coaching staff."



Argentina skipper Lionel Messi and midfielder Leandro Paredes look all set to begin their final stretch of preparations ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, as the defending champions face Mauritania on Saturday morning in their first of two friendlies before the quadrennial event. They will then take on Zambia on April 1, with both friendlies set to be held at La Bombonera in Buenos Aires. Lionel Scaloni's side were scheduled to play Spain in the "Finalissima" in Qatar during this international window, but the game was canceled due to the conflict in the Middle East.

PHOTO: X



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## JULY UPRISING CASE Ex-DGFI chief Mamun Khaled on remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lt Gen (retd) Sheikh Mamun Khaled, former chief of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), was arrested yesterday and placed on a five-day remand in connection with a murder case linked to the July uprising.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Siddique Azad passed the order after detectives produced the 63-year-old before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, seeking a seven-day remand.

Khaled was brought to court around 3:00pm under tight security after being detained very early in the morning in Mirpur DOHS.

According to the prosecution, furniture trader Mohammad Delowar Hossain was shot in the Mirpur-10 area on July 19, 2024, during quota reform protests that later escalated into a mass uprising. He died two days later while undergoing treatment at a hospital in Shyamoli.

Delowar's wife filed the case with Mirpur Model Police Station, naming 74 accused, mostly Awami League leaders and activists.

During the hearing, Public Prosecutor Omar Faruq



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Firefighters douse a blaze on the Chattala Express, which burst into flames as it was crossing Sitakunda early yesterday. The Dhaka-bound train from Chattogram was carrying more than 600 passengers across 16 coaches. The fire started in the power car and later spread to an air-conditioned coach. No casualties were reported; two coaches were damaged. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## 4 of a family, driver killed as bus rams car

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Five people, including four members of the same family, were killed yesterday when a bus rear-ended a car on the Dhaka-Chattoogram highway in Cumilla's Burichang upazila.

The victims were identified as Abdul Momin, 50; his wife Jharna Begum, 40; their daughter Labiba, 18; and son Saif, 7, all from Chatarpaiya village in Sonaimuri upazila of Noakhali. The car's driver, Jamal Hossain, 52, of Barishal, also died in the crash.

Abrar, 12, another son of Momin and Jharna, survived the crash and is now out of danger, said Md Abdul Momin, officer-in-charge of Mainamati Highway Police Station, quoting doctors.

The OC said the accident occurred around 6:00pm. "The driver died on the spot, while the four passengers were rushed to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared them dead," he added.

The family was travelling from Dhaka to their village home in Sonaimuri when the Starline Paribahan bus hit their car.

## HADI MURDER SUSPECT Request has been made for extradition Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said a formal request has been sent to India through the foreign ministry to bring back an accused in the murder case of Inquilab Moncho Convenor Sharif Osman Bin Hadi.

The handover process was underway under the existing extradition treaty between the two countries, he told reporters after paying homage at the Rajarbagh Police Memorial on the occasion of Independence and National Day.

A court in Bidhannagar, West Bengal handed over Faisal Karim Masud, the prime accused in the murder of Sharif Osman Hadi, and his associate Alamgir Hossain to India's National Investigation Agency (NIA), according to Prothom Alo.

The NIA took them to Delhi on Monday night on transit remand, where they are to be produced before a special NIA court, the report said.

The agency sought the custody of Faisal and Alamgir at the Bidhannagar Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate's Court in the North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, and the court granted the plea.

Subject to the court's permission, NIA investigators would interrogate the two in the interest of the investigation, it added.

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## Peace talks confusion fuels oil price surge, market turmoil

AFP, London

Oil prices jumped and equities slid yesterday as hopes for a peace deal between the US and Iran wavered after Tehran rejected Washington's bid to wind down the nearly four-week war.

Markets had been buoyed this week by US President Donald Trump's announcement that strikes targeting Iran's energy infrastructure would be postponed, adding that the two sides were in peace talks.

But uncertainty over the talks and the virtual closure of the Strait of Hormuz -- through which around 20 percent of oil and liquefied natural gas normally passes -- have cast a shadow over market sentiment.

"The market rollercoaster continues," said Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets.

Crude prices rallied more than nearly four percent on Thursday, with Brent crude above \$101 per barrel and WTI around \$94. The dollar rose against its main rivals.

Wall Street opened lower, with Europe's main markets down in afternoon trading, while there were losses across Asia.

"When the oil price surges, the market playbook stays the same: stocks and bonds sell off," said Kathleen Brooks, research director

at XTB.

The yield on government bonds rose across the board.

Conflicting messages from the US and Iran are "raising questions about whether there is really an off-ramp to the conflict in the days ahead," said Deutsche Bank's Jim Reid.

Washington was said to have presented a 15-point plan to end the war, while Tehran's state-run TV reported officials had put forward their own five conditions for hostilities to end.

Trump on Wednesday threatened to "unleash hell" if Iran did not strike a deal, but Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said his country does not intend to negotiate with the administration in Washington.

"This is quite the shift in rhetoric from the President, and highlights how complex it will be" to reach a peace deal, said XTB's Brooks.

She added that "the prospect of troops on the ground suggest a prolonged war and not one final blow at Iran."

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar confirmed yesterday that indirect negotiations between the US and Iran were being held, using Islamabad as an intermediary.

"The tone taken by Iran may simply be posturing, but... there is a high likelihood they

Crude prices rallied more than nearly four percent yesterday

Wall Street opened lower, with Europe also down and losses across Asia

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## Govt approves emergency diesel import 300,000 tonnes to cover 25 days amid ME war concerns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has authorised the emergency purchase of 300,000 tonnes of diesel, moving swiftly to secure domestic fuel supplies as the escalating war in the Middle East threatens global energy markets.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs took the decision yesterday at a virtual meeting chaired by Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury.

Diesel is the most widely consumed petroleum product in Bangladesh, which meets almost all of its petroleum requirements through imports. The country consumed 68 lakh tonnes of petroleum in the 2024-25 fiscal year, of which 43.5 lakh tonnes was diesel.

The new purchase will cover roughly 25 days of national demand.

The meeting, considering the unstable geopolitical situation arising from the Iran-US-Israel war, approved two proposals from the Energy and Mineral

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## Ancient dog DNA traces 16,000 years of human bond

AFP, Paris

The discovery of the oldest ever dog DNA suggests they have been our best friends for nearly 16,000 years -- 5,000 years earlier than had previously been thought, new research said Wednesday.

Despite being ubiquitous in the homes, backyards and hearts of people across the world, surprisingly little is known about where dogs come from.

"It's just an interesting mystery," Swedish geneticist Pontus Skoglund of the UK's Francis Crick Institute told reporters.

Dogs are most likely a mix of two types of grey wolves, he said. However exactly when dogs diverged from wolves has been difficult to trace, partly because their ancient bones are tricky to tell apart.

That is why scientists behind two new studies published in the journal Nature sequenced the genomes from archaeological remains, shedding light on the elusive origins of our furry friends.

The first study revealed that the world's oldest canine DNA was discovered in a piece of a skull in Pinarbasi in what is now Turkey.

The female puppy, which was perhaps "a few months old", probably looked like a small wolf when it lived roughly 15,800 years ago, according to study co-author Laurent Frantz of the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

Before Wednesday, the oldest-known dog DNA was from 10,900 years ago.



## College student shot dead by men posing as police CID, PBI, DB launch drives to identify attackers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A college student was chased from his home and shot dead by assailants in Bagerhat's Chitalmari upazila yesterday afternoon.

The victim was identified as Amir Hamza, 23, son of Ruhul Amin Munshi of Shibpur village, and a first-year honours student at Khulna Government Sundarban College. He also worked at Popular Diagnostic Centre in Khulna.

Bagerhat Additional Superintendent of Police Md Shamim Hossain confirmed the incident and said law enforcement agencies, including CID, PBI and DB, have launched efforts to identify and arrest those involved in the killing.

According to the victim's family members and locals, around 4:00pm, Amir was in the yard of his house talking with his father and uncle when a group

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## THE FOREST ACROBAT

A velvet-black eastern hoolock gibbon clings to a slender bamboo in Lawachara National Park in Moulvibazar, quietly surveying its green kingdom. The eastern hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock leuconedys*) is a lesser ape, built to swing effortlessly through continuous forest canopies that serve as both road and refuge.

Native to eastern Bangladesh, Northeast India, Myanmar, and Southwest China, it inhabits evergreen and semi-evergreen forests, often sleeping curled high on hilltop trees. Fruits, especially figs, form the bulk of its diet, supplemented by leaves, insects, and eggs. Their haunting morning duets echo across kilometres, strengthening lifelong family bonds. Listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, the species faces mounting threats from deforestation, habitat fragmentation, and hunting.

PHOTO: NOBEL CHAKMA

## VIOLENCE IN 'GEN Z' PROTESTS Nepal panel for prosecution of ousted PM

REUTERS, Kathmandu

A Nepali panel set up to investigate the violence during anti-corruption protests in September last year has recommended that former prime minister K P Sharma Oli be prosecuted for "negligence" for failing to prevent dozens of deaths.

The report comes two days before rapper-turned politician Balendra Shah is sworn in as the new prime minister after winning a landslide in the parliamentary election following the protests.

The panel held Oli, 74, responsible for not taking any action to stop hours of firing that killed at least 19 Gen Z protesters on the first day of anti-corruption demonstrations that forced him to resign.

A total of 76 people were killed and 2,522 wounded during two days of unrest, the panel said in its report released late on Wednesday night. The government had earlier said 77 people had died.

"As the executive head... Oli should be held responsible for anything good or bad," the 970-page report said in Nepali.

The report also held Oli's home minister Ramesh



K P Sharma Oli

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