The Daily Star
FOUNDER EDITOR: **LATE S. M. ALI**

Ceasefire brings a much-needed relief

US, Israel should consider Iran war's global impact, agree on upholding peace

We welcome the two-week pause in the war between Iran and the US, which came at the 11th hour. The ceasefire indeed brings a great sense of relief not just for the people of Iran, who have been enduring persistent bombing for over a month, but also for the people of Bangladesh and the world at large. As part of the ceasefire deal, Iran has agreed to the safe transit of ships through the Strait of Hormuz. The reaction to this development is evident in international oil prices, which dropped below $100 per barrel for the first time in weeks.

For most of us, this war, imposed on Iran by the US and Israel, has been incomprehensible. It has broken all international rules and norms and lacks a clear purpose, further dramatised by US President Donald Trump's social media rhetoric. In his latest post, Trump even threatened to destroy the entire Iranian civilisation, only 12 hours before the deadline he had set for the opening of the Strait of Hormuz. How could a head of state express the intent to destroy a civilisation! This is unheard of and unacceptable, and must be condemned worldwide.

The ceasefire has created a window to resolve the crisis through discussion. In this regard, we would like to compliment Pakistan for being able to convince the US president and the Iranian leadership, as both sides reposed their confidence in Pakistan as a mediator. However, the issue of what started the war in the first place, and Israel's role in it, must be raised. Based on facts, we know that Israel's intention from the very beginning has been to drag the US into the war by pushing the narrative that the assassination of Iran's supreme leader would collapse the country's theocratic regime. Israel went about implementing that illegal act of killing another country's leader, with President Trump believing the Israeli narrative, while the world watched in silence. Despite all this, Iran proved its resilience despite relentless bombing by the US and Israel, with the latter continuing its assassination of the Iranian leadership.

With time, Israel's greater goal of expanding its territory at the cost of its neighbours will become clear. Even as the world welcomes this ceasefire, Israel has launched new strikes on Lebanon, claiming the truce does not include Lebanon. It remains to be seen how Israel will react if peace is brokered between the US and Iran. While we await a positive outcome, the world and, more importantly, the American people should wake up to Israel's intention of derailing the negotiation. They must decide whether Israel's intention would ultimately lead to a peaceful world or a conflict-ridden one. Finally, we wish the negotiation hosted by Pakistan, set to take place on Friday, is pursued with in-depth understanding of how this war has caused instability and chaos around the world.

Keep BCB away from political influence

Appointments should prioritise expertise, not partisan stance

In the latest episode of a management shake-up, the National Sports Council (NSC) dissolved the board of directors of the country's cricket regulator on Tuesday. The decision follows a probe report that found the board's October 2025 election to be marred by irregularities. The NSC has put an 11-member ad hoc committee, headed by former men's national team captain Tamim Iqbal, in charge of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), a move rejected by the now-former board president, another national cricket veteran, Aminul Islam Bulbul, who has categorically denied the allegations levelled against his team. This dramatic changeover has naturally raised eyebrows.

The probe report, we are told, found several instances of irregularities during the election, such as government interference, including by the then sports adviser, disputes over councillorships, loopholes in BCB constitution, and undue influence wielded by the then president and other board members. In fact, these controversies surrounded the election from the beginning, with the current ad hoc president—who was also in the running in the polls—withdrawing from the contest, alleging "political interference and conspiracies." We cannot help but wonder: why did the NSC not investigate these allegations at the time?

Interestingly, the ad hoc committee has failed to escape the political influence that its predecessor was accused of. The new management includes several members who are direct relatives of sitting ministers and have no connection with professional cricket. How are they expected to serve the interests of the sport without relevant expertise? For a government that aims to remove political influence from sports—as the state minister for youth and sports has recently reiterated—this move is indeed baffling.

This whole state of affairs has set a poor precedent, and regardless of who comes out on top, cricket will be the ultimate victim. If the government is committed to the growth of sports, it must break the cycle of partisan interference and ensure that all sports administrations are beyond reproach. The immediate priority should be to ensure that the ad hoc committee adheres to its mandate of holding the BCB election within three months. Beyond that, it must ensure that only those with expertise in professional cricket get a seat at the table. And to keep the election free from controversy, members of the ad hoc committee should not be allowed to take part in it. If they wish to contest, they must first step down from their administrative roles.

We also urge the NSC to ensure that future BCB boards are formed in line with the standards set by the International Cricket Council. To this end, it must examine the alleged constitutional loopholes and amend the BCB constitution as necessary.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Baghdad falls to US

On this day in 2003, Baghdad fell to US-led forces, several weeks after the start of the Iraq War. US President George W Bush argued the conflict was necessary so as to oust Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, due to his regime's supposed possession of weapons of mass destruction and support of terrorist groups.

The HC has spoken: Repeal can't undo judicial autonomy

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With regard to the preservation of our judicial autonomy, the real question was never whether Bangladesh would aspire to achieve it, but whether the state was prepared to surrender the administrative levers through which the courts are quietly managed. The recent release of the full judgment in Writ Petition No. 10356 of 2024 makes that question impossible to evade (although the judgment was pronounced in September 2025, the full 185-page text was published on April 7, 2026). This landmark judgment was delivered by Justice Ahmed Sohel and Justice Debasish Roy Chowdhury. The High Court, on pages 157 and 158 of the full text, says that the consultative formula under the amended Article 116 of the constitution had become "illusory and meaningless"; on page 167, that a separate secretariat is a constitutional imperative; on page 182, that true judicial independence requires dismantling the "dual governance system"; and on page 184, it directs the government (that is, the law ministry) and other relevant respondents to establish an independent separate secretariat within three months.

The publication of the full judgment—with its rebuke, observations, and instructions—comes at an awkward moment for the government and the parliament. As we know, a parliamentary special committee has recently recommended repeal of the Supreme Court Secretariat Ordinance, 2025, and the law minister has already tabled a repeal bill. But the secretariat is no longer a theoretical future institution. Under the then Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, a secretary was assigned, a post-creation committee was formed, the institution was formally inaugurated, and hundreds of posts were approved. In other words, the state's current attempt means repealing not just the ordinance but also a structure it had already begun to operationalise, and it would create a vacuum if it goes ahead with it. That is why the practical question surrounding the ordinance is so serious.

In spirit, the ordinance followed the HC judgment far more closely than its critics want to admit. Its preamble was built around Articles 22, 109, and 116 of the constitution, and around the unfinished constitutional project of separating the judiciary from the executive, with explicit reference to the *Masdar Hossain case* (Civil Appeal No. 79 of 1999). Section 4 of the ordinance placed the overall control of the secretariat with the chief justice. Sections 11 and 12 gave the secretariat separate budgetary space and freed expenditure from prior executive approval. These were not cosmetic provisions. They reflected the same institutional insight that now runs through the judgment: judicial independence is meaningless if the court does not control the administrative machinery through which independence is lived. That is precisely why the HC insisted, on page 167, that a separate secretariat is not a matter of executive discretion, but a constitutional necessity.

VISUAL: **ANWAR SOHEL**

In content, too, the ordinance anticipated much of what the judgment demands. The secretariat was empowered to deal with staffing, organisational structure, budget management, research, training, post creation and, in design, even the posting, promotion, transfer, discipline, and leave of members of the judicial service. The ordinance, therefore, recognised something Bangladesh's political class has long preferred to deny: courts are not controlled only by spectacular constitutional amendments or headline-grabbing appointments; they are controlled through payroll, posts, promotions, files, leave, buildings, training, and the daily circulation of administrative power. On that basic institutional diagnosis, the ordinance and the judgment were travelling in the same direction.

It should be acknowledged, however, that the ordinance did not fully reach the constitutional position that today's judgment has restored. It was drafted under the old, compromised Article 116. So while it moved boldly towards autonomy, it still carried traces of the very executive architecture the High Court has now condemned. The most obvious example is section 7, which envisaged the secretariat performing service administration for judicial officers "on behalf of the President." Section 16 also left a disciplinary role with the Law and Justice Division in certain cases. Sections 8, 10, and 17 embedded executive secretaries, and even the law minister or adviser, inside key planning, commission, and post-creation structures. While the judgment recognises that some dealings between the judiciary and the executive are inevitable for financial and administrative purposes, it immediately draws the line by insisting that the dual governance system, being the joint authority of the Supreme Court and the law ministry, must be dismantled, which is a striking direction expressed in mandatory terms (pages 181-182). The court also rejects, in pages 154 and 155, the stale excuse that the restored Article 116 cannot function alongside the present Article 115. The ordinance, then, was a bridge text—not the constitutional destination.

This is why the fate of the already established secretariat should not be abolition but realignment. The judgment is a constitutional command, not an administrative manual. It restores Article 116 and orders an independent separate secretariat, but it does not itself create posts, assign staff, write budget rules, or design transition clauses. The ordinance, for all its defects, has already done much of that institutional groundwork. The parliament should, therefore, stop pretending that the choice is between a tainted ordinance and some pristine future law. The real choice is between preserving a partially built architecture and returning judicial administration to the old maze of ministry control. If repeal proceeds without a simultaneous replacement and savings framework, its most likely outcome will not be reform but rather administrative confusion followed by executive recapture.

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The constitutionally responsible path here is straightforward: withdraw the repeal bill or convert it immediately into an amendment bill. Keep the secretariat alive. Validate all acts already done under the ordinance. Allow the existing secretariat to continue under the new legal framework. Remove every reference that makes the secretariat act for the president under Article 116. Remove the law ministry's residual disciplinary grip over judicial service matters. Recast executive participation in committees as coordination, not control. Preserve what the ordinance got right—namely, chief justice-led control, direct institutional communication, staffing authority, and budgetary autonomy. Do not destroy the machine merely because its wiring needs to be corrected in light of a judgment that finally restored the original constitutional current.

Let us be honest: a parliament that responds to a judgment demanding an independent secretariat by abolishing the only functioning legal framework that has begun to build one would not be defending constitutionalism. It would be mocking it. Bangladesh does not need a judiciary that is independent in rhetoric but subordinate in administration. The High Court has now said exactly that, in substance and in unmistakable terms. The only serious question left is whether the political class is prepared to accept a judiciary it cannot quietly manage.

Hasty diagnosis is derailing autism care

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IMDADUL HAQUE TALUKDAR

Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is not a disease, but a complex neuro-developmental condition. Over the last decade, social awareness regarding autism has grown significantly in Bangladesh. However, as a mental public health specialist, I find the systemic weaknesses in the identification and service delivery processes at the grassroots level deeply concerning. Specifically, the hurried and unscientific manner in which disability allowances are determined at the upazila and district levels poses a major threat to both the rights of affected children and the state's future planning.

At the primary level, the responsibility for identifying disabilities rests with medical officers at upazila health complexes. Most of these officers lack specialised clinical training in ASD or neurodevelopmental disorders. The MBBS curriculum covers this subject only briefly, making it nearly impossible for a general practitioner to accurately diagnose a child by analysing complex behavioural traits. During the selection process for disability allowances, when hundreds of applicants gather, decisions are often made within minutes based on superficial physical examinations or anecdotal evidence from parents or guardians. This culture of haste is a red flag for public health. Autism is not something that can be detected with a stethoscope or based on a blood test; it requires prolonged observation and a rigorous evaluation of the child's social and communication skills. In the absence of specialised training, these rushed decisions frequently lead to misdiagnosis.

Every scientific determination requires a gold standard or an objective tool. While the developed world utilises internationally recognised scientific protocols to identify autism, Bangladesh has yet to mandate a simplified, scientific national standard diagnostic tool that a general physician at the grassroots level can use easily. Due to the lack of a uniform guideline, different doctors apply different criteria. Consequently, children with hearing impairments or intellectual disabilities are sometimes mistakenly issued autism cards, while those truly on the spectrum are excluded due to inadequate assessment. This not only results in inaccurate national statistics but also deprives those in genuine need of appropriate therapy and support.

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Furthermore, the repercussions of misdiagnosis extend far beyond the individual, impacting state-level policymaking. When inaccurate data enters our Disability Information System (DIS), it inevitably compromises government planning and budget allocations. If public health policies are built on flawed data, the core issues remain unaddressed, leading to a waste of state resources and the marginalisation of rightful beneficiaries.

There needs to be radical reform in the autism diagnosis process. Every medical officer at the upazila level must undergo intensive, short-term training to help them recognise the clinical symptoms of autism accurately. Furthermore, a validated screening tool, translated into Bangla, must be made mandatory. We also need to move away from relying on a single physician and instead form multi-disciplinary teams comprising social service officers, physiotherapists, and psychologists. Dedicated time and spaces must be allocated for these assessments to ensure every child receives the attention they require. Finally, a digital monitoring system should be established to allow experts at the district or divisional levels to randomly verify the data sent from the upazilas.

Sympathy for individuals with autism is not enough; ensuring their civic rights is a moral obligation for the state and for all of us. With the existing perfunctory assessments, we are not just creating flawed statistics but also jeopardising the future of thousands of children. Let us look beyond the formalities and commit to fixing structural flaws. An accurate diagnosis is, after all, the first and most vital step towards effective care.

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