



"The general trend of compatriots on both sides of the Strait getting closer, edging nearer and becoming united will not change."
Xi tells Taiwan opposition leader

The Daily Star

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

SECOND EDITION



DHAKA SATURDAY APRIL 11, 2026

Plus 16 pages tabloid on Baishakh 1433

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXVI No. 82

CHAITRA 28, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

SHAWWAL 22, 1447 HJRI

16 PAGES: Tk 15.00

US-Iran talks 'on track' amid truce violations

Pakistan says delegations on their way amid setbacks over Lebanon, Hormuz

AGENCIES

Pakistan's capital was all set for historic negotiations between Iran and the US to end the war, as ceasefire violations threatened to derail hopes of peace in the Middle East and beyond.

Even as the US-Iran ceasefire looked increasingly precarious, amid Israel's continued bombardment of Lebanon and disputes over the terms of the talks, Pakistani officials insisted that the make-or-break peace negotiations would go ahead over the weekend as planned.

The conflict, which began when Israel and the US attacked Iran on February 28, has left thousands dead and caused global economic

Vance leaves for Pakistan, hopes for 'positive' outcome

Khamenei says Iran doesn't seek war, but ready for it

Trump says Iran will be hit harder if talks fail to achieve goals

devastation. Iran's retaliatory blockade of the critical shipping route, the Strait of Hormuz, has led to a global shortage of oil and gas and triggered the worst energy crisis in history.

Ahead of the talks, Iran yesterday set a ceasefire in Lebanon and the "release of Iran's blocked assets" as pre-conditions for any negotiations with the US.

"Two of the measures mutually agreed upon between the parties have yet to be implemented: a ceasefire in Lebanon and the release of Iran's blocked assets prior to the commencement of negotiations," Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf wrote in a post on X in English.

"These two matters must be fulfilled before negotiations begin." President Donald Trump yesterday, said that Iran has "no cards" in upcoming talks with the United States -- apart from Tehran's effective stranglehold on the crucial strait.

Vice President JD Vance, who will lead the US delegation, yesterday set off for the talks in Pakistan, saying he expected a positive outcome, but "if they're going to try to play us, then they're going to find the negotiating team is not that receptive".

The two-day-old ceasefire has halted the campaign of US and Israeli air strikes on Iran. But it has so far done nothing to end the blockade of the strait.

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First responders search under the rubble at the site of an Israeli airstrike in the village of Habbouch, southern Lebanon, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

ME war to cost Tk 36,000cr in extra subsidies

Finance minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday told parliament that the US-Israel war on Iran will force the government to provide nearly Tk 36,000 crore in additional subsidies for electricity, energy, and LNG during the March-June period of the current fiscal year.

"Prices of crude oil and LNG have more than doubled in the international market," he said under Rule 300 of the Rules of Procedure while addressing the House on the fragile state of the economy inherited from the previous government.

The Middle East war has created new uncertainties in the global energy

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

20 ordinances lose validity

Opposition alleges breach of consensus, stages walkout from House

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Twenty of the 133 ordinances issued by the interim government -- including major reforms on judicial independence, human rights, and anti-corruption -- are set to lose validity from today.

Of those, seven were repealed through four bills, while 13 automatically expired as parliament failed to ratify them within the constitutionally mandated 30-day period since its first sitting on March 12.

The expired ordinances include those on preventing enforced disappearances, strengthening the Anti-Corruption Commission, and establishing the Reference and

FATE OF ORDINANCES

Total ordinances: 133

Ratified in JS: 113

Last validity: 20 (7 repealed, 13 lapsed)

Police Commissions.

Alleging a breach of consensus and trust over the government's failure to ratify all 133 ordinances, the Jamaat-led opposition alliance staged a walkout towards the end of yesterday's sitting.

Referring to the lapsing of certain

ordinances, opposition leader Shafiqur Rahman said it would "bring about a rebirth of fascism", adding that the opposition would take no responsibility for it.

Citing Article 93 of the constitution, Law Minister Md Asaduzzman told the House that there are three options regarding ordinances. "Within 30 days, the ordinances must be placed before you [Speaker of the House] -- and we have done so. If any ordinance is not presented, it stands repealed. Those that are presented must then be approved in the form of bills or rejected."

The repealed ordinances included the National Parliament Secretariat

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JULY MUSEUM BILL Changes trigger fiery exchange

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliament yesterday passed the July Uprising Memorial Museum Bill, 2026, incorporating provisions that place the state minister for cultural affairs as head of the museum and empower the government to dismiss council members.

The move triggered heated debate and a walkout by the Jamaat-e-Islami-led opposition alliance.

The bill, placed by Cultural Affairs Minister Nitai Roy Chowdhury during a session presided over by Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad, adopted three amendments to section 8 proposed by treasury bench lawmaker Anisur Rahman.

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ADB flags growing debt risks

Lowers growth forecast to 4%

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh has so far avoided a public debt default, but clear warning signs demand immediate and strategic action to safeguard the country's fiscal sustainability, according to the latest outlook by the Asian Development Bank.

In its Asian Development Outlook released yesterday, the lender said public debt, the total amount the government owes, both at home and abroad, is rising steadily and is projected to reach 42.4 percent of GDP by the end of the current fiscal year from an estimated 42.1 percent in FY2025.

The report said that Bangladesh's debt has grown not only in size but

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44 of 94 ICU beds lie unused across Rajshahi division

Shortage of trained personnel to run the specialised units to blame

SHOHANUR RAHMAN RAFI, Rajshahi

Since the measles outbreak began in late March, Rajshahi division has faced a severe health crisis, worsened by non-functional intensive care facilities.

Health officials said 44 of 94 ICU beds across the division remain idle due to staff shortages. As a result, critically ill patients from neighbouring districts are mostly referred to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH), which is struggling under mounting pressure.

RMCH sources reported 48 suspected measles deaths so far this year, with 508 patients with measles symptoms currently under treatment. The shortage of ICU facilities has had even wider consequences: in March alone, 229 patients -- including 91 children -- died at RMCH while waiting for ICU beds.

Pressure mounts at RMCH

229 patients, including 91 children, died in March while waiting for ICU beds

508 patients with measles symptoms currently under treatment

Dr Md Habibur Rahman, Rajshahi divisional health director, said the high admission and mortality rates reflect the lack of functional ICUs at district hospitals.

"When measles patients develop serious complications, they are referred to RMCH because district hospitals cannot manage critical cases. Even

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Little Anas, who had been receiving treatment for measles at the DNCC Dedicated Covid-19 Hospital in the capital's Mohakhali, smiles with his mother as he was getting discharged yesterday. After six days of treatment, news of his improvement comes as a sigh of relief for the family, as the number of measles-related deaths continues to climb. Four more children died from suspected measles in the 24 hours till yesterday morning, according to DGHS.

7 DAYS TO GO

Time to celebrate the remarkable achievements of our young nation builders

25th

O&A LEVEL AWARDS

Saluting the Nation Builders of Tomorrow

Date: Saturday, April 18, 2026
Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Center
Dhaka Bypass Expressway, Sector 4, Purbachal.

*Participation is by invitation only.



PHOTOS: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

Aam tel and the Bengali palate

RBR

My first encounter with the word "aam tel" wasn't in my own kitchen, but through the West Bengal series "Indubala's Bhaater Hotel". In my corner of Bengal, we always called it aam'er achar'er tel – the oil from green mango pickle.

The West Bengal name, however, carries a lyrical charm that instantly evokes the essence of this traditional Bengali creation: sun-cured raw mango pickle steeped in mustard oil, sharp, pungent, and deeply savoury.

There is more than love in aam tel; it is painstakingly made with thinly sliced unripe mangoes, cold-pressed mustard oil (ghani sorsher tel), and a medley of spices – panch phoron (fenugreek, cumin, nigella, black mustard, fennel), turmeric, and red chillies. The result is tangy and sour, with a fiery jhaj from the mustard oil that defines the Bengali palate.

Boishakh, the season of green mangoes, makes this fruit inseparable from the cuisine of the time. The tartness of unripe mangoes is celebrated in countless ways: sliced and sprinkled with salt and chili powder as a quick

snack, blended into cooling aam panna – or as we call it in Dhaka, kacha aam'er shorbot – cooked into tangy tok daal (lentils with mango), or transformed into fiery pickles like aam tel.

Green mangoes embody the spirit of Boishakh because they bring people together. Families and friends exchange love in the form of achar. On any given Boishakhi weekend in Dhaka, achar-making unfolds as part of the season's rhythm. Mangoes are sliced in kitchens, jars line verandas, and the pungent aroma of mustard oil mingles with the heat of April afternoons – all set against the ritual of placing jars out in the sun to cure. It is a sensory celebration of community and tradition.

The versatility of green mango makes it central to both festive spreads and humble home cooking, much like pithas during nobanno. Every household has its own method of slicing, spicing, and sun-curing, yet the essence remains the same: achar is the sharp, pungent heartbeat of Bengali cuisine.

While achar is beloved across South Asia, each region has its own spin. What sets Bengali achar apart is mustard oil –

used not just as a preservative but as the flavour's foundation. This oil imparts the unmistakable pungency, the jhaj, that defines Bengali taste. Bengali achar is less about quick preservation and more about slow maturation, a process that mirrors the patience and artistry woven into Bengali culinary traditions.

Fruits like mango, boroi (plum), chalta (elephant apple), and amlaki (Indian gooseberry) are transformed into complex condiments that balance sourness, heat, and subtle sweetness. Among all varieties, aam tel – raw mango pickle submerged in mustard oil – stands as the crown jewel. To taste aam tel is to taste Boishakh itself: the sour bite of unripe mango, the earthy depth of mustard oil, and the riot of spices from panch phoron.

This heritage is beautifully captured by Achari, an online store specializing in traditional Bengali pickles and spice mixes. I stumbled upon [an Achari stall] at a recent fair in Dhaka, and thought of sharing the experience with My Dhaka readers for their Boishakhi lunch.

Achari is a homemade pickle and balachao brand, rooted in family recipes

perfected with cold-pressed mustard oil, sun-ripened fruits, hand-picked chillies, and freshly ground spices. More than food, Achari captures the soul of Bengali kitchens and preserves it in a jar.

My favourite from their menu is the Chalta Lila pickle, where the tang of elephant apple meets the sweetness of jaggery, without the harsh astringency. However, Tintiri, a raw tamarind dry pickle, is their best seller; one bite, and you will reach for the entire jar.

I liked Achari's nomenclature for its product line; Tintiri, for example, is the Sanskrit word for tamarind tree or fruit; Jolpaishatta is a deshi olive pulp chewy bar; Golpai, a rounded olive pulp preparation.

You'll find them at fairs and festivals such as the SME Boishakhi Mela 1433, scheduled for April 12-18, 2026, at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, and at Alok Convention Hall on April 13-14 for the Arka Boishakhi Fair.

Do not miss out on the season's delight – green mango. It is pungent, fiery, tangy, and sweet all at once, just like Bengali itself.

4 assaulted by 'Azadi Andolon' in Shahbagh

Victims say they were targeted over gender identity; women harassed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least four people were assaulted by a crowd rallying under the banner of "Azadi Andolon" in the capital's Shahbagh last night.

The attackers reportedly targeted the victims after accusing them of being "queer" or "gender diverse". The incident took place around 8:00pm near the National Museum gate. Videos circulating on social media later showed a crowd throwing the victims to the ground and assaulting them.

The victims alleged that they were attacked without provocation and claimed that women in the group were sexually harassed during the incident.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Kazi Tahsin Agaz, a victim of the attack, said that around 20 people brought out a procession in the area, chanting slogans against homosexuality.

"While we were having tea at a roadside shop nearby, the group surrounded us... When we were about to leave, they started touching women inappropriately, sexually abusing them.

"We repeatedly asked them not to beat us, but they kept hitting us, targeting our heads."

Agaz added that the attackers were shouting slogans calling for violence against the LGBTQI community.

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Thakurgaon youth killed in South Africa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A Bangladeshi youth was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Zonkizizwe Township of Katlehong, Johannesburg, on Thursday night.

The victim, Sohan Hossain, 18, was the son of Md Dulal of Chikanmatli village of Thakurgaon's Ranishankoil upazila.

Sohan's paternal uncle, Sirajul Islam, who had taken him to South Africa about two months ago and employed him at his shop, said they were at the shop around 7:30pm (local time) when the power suddenly went out.

"At that time, two local men came to the shop and one asked for a candle and the other for a cigarette," he told The Daily Star over the phone.

"As Sohan went to take money for the candle, and I moved to get the cigarette inside the shop, I suddenly heard several gunshots. I saw him lying on the floor. He died on the spot."

Contacted, Rafiqul Islam, Thakurgaon deputy commissioner, said the administration would take necessary steps to assist in bringing back the body once the family approaches them.

US-Iran talks 'on track' amid truce violations

FROM PAGE 1

On Thursday, Trump blasted Iran for doing a "very poor job" of letting oil through the strait. He also warned Tehran against trying to collect fees from ships crossing it. "That is not the agreement we have!"

Trump, in an interview with the New York Post yesterday, said that US warships are being reloaded with weaponry to strike Iran if talks in Pakistan fail to produce a deal.

"We have a reset going. We're loading up the ships with the best ammunition, the best weapons ever made – even better than what we did previously, and we blew them apart," the Post quoted Trump as saying.

"And if we don't have a deal, we will be using them, and we will be using them very effectively."

While Iran and Pakistan stated that the ceasefire included Lebanon, the US and Israel have since insisted that it is a separate issue.

Israeli forces launched the biggest attack of the war hours after the ceasefire was announced, killing more than 250 Lebanese in surprise strikes on heavily populated areas. Strikes across southern Lebanon yesterday killed more than a dozen people, Lebanon's state media said.

Meanwhile, air raid alerts sounded across Israel, including in the commercial hub of Tel Aviv and the southern coastal city of Ashdod, after rocket fire from Lebanon. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

In a shift on Thursday, Israel said it would open separate talks with the Lebanese government aimed at ending

the war there and disarming Hezbollah. A US State Department official confirmed the US would host an Israeli-Lebanese meeting next week.

Amid the gloom, a Pakistani source said "everything is on track" for the US-Iran peace talks to start today as planned.

Advance teams from both countries were already in place in the five-star Serena hotel in central Islamabad, where both delegations would stay for the duration of the talks. There were no face-to-face meetings planned for Friday, but Pakistan was relaying messages between them, the source said.

According to the Wall Street Journal, an Iranian delegation, led by Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, and parliament Speaker, Ghalibaf, arrived in Islamabad late Thursday.

The centre of Islamabad was placed under complete lockdown for a hastily announced public holiday, with a security perimeter thrown up for a 3-km (2 mile) "red zone" around the hotel.

Although Trump has declared victory, the war did not achieve the aims he set out at the start: to deprive Iran of the ability to strike its neighbours, dismantle its nuclear programme and make it easier for its people to overthrow their government.

Iran still possesses missiles and drones capable of hitting its neighbours and a stockpile of more than 400 kg (900 pounds) of uranium enriched near the level needed to make a bomb. Its clerical rulers, who faced a popular uprising just months ago, withstood the onslaught with no sign of organised opposition.

Iran's agenda at the talks now includes demands for major new concessions, including the end of sanctions that crippled its economy for years, and acknowledgement of its authority over the strait, where it aims to collect transit fees and control access in what would amount to a huge shift in regional power.

Its new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, yet to be seen in public since taking over from his father, released a defiant statement on Thursday saying Iran would demand compensation for all wartime damage.

"We will certainly not leave unpunished the criminal aggressors who attacked our country," he said.

The United States, for its part, wants Iran to relinquish the uranium, forgo further enrichment, give up its missiles and end support for regional allies – years-old demands left over from talks Trump abandoned two days before launching the war.

Pakistani officials remained tight-lipped about the arrangements for the negotiations, citing security and diplomatic concerns, but said the preparations were full steam ahead.

Apart from the foreign minister and Speaker, senior figures from Iran's Revolutionary Guard are also expected to attend the talks.

Officials said that delegations from Gulf countries, including Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which have faced heavy bombardment from Iran since the war began, would also be travelling to Islamabad and may take part in sideline talks.

ME war to cost Tk 36,000cr in extra subsidies

FROM PAGE 1

supply chains, and international trade, the minister said, adding, "This will not only increase the budget deficit but also put pressure on foreign currency reserves, as an equivalent of about USD 3 billion will be required for import payments."

To address the situation, the government has taken measures to encourage efficient energy use, including closing government and autonomous offices at 4:00pm instead of 5:00pm, maximising daylight to reduce electric lighting and regulating air-conditioner temperatures, closing markets and shopping malls by 7:00pm, securing energy from alternative suppliers, ensuring timely subsidy releases to maintain uninterrupted imports and supply, and seeking additional budgetary support from development partners to ease fiscal and balance-of-payments pressures.

Khosru said that as an import-dependent economy, Bangladesh is not immune to this geopolitical reality, adding that despite the need for higher subsidies due to global energy prices, the government has decided not to adjust domestic prices for now, considering public hardship.

The government has already started working on formulating the budget for FY 2026-27, with the aim of establishing discipline across various sectors of the economy and addressing multifaceted pressures.

"We are fully aware of the immense expectations of the people from the first budget of the newly elected government. At the same time, we hope the public will also recognise the limitations we

face due to inherited challenges," the finance minister said, adding that the government's goal is not merely growth, but to build a sustainable, transparent, and inclusive economy.

Taking stock of the situation inherited from the Awami League government, the finance minister presented the state of macroeconomic indicators, social sector indicators, and institutional conditions across three key periods: the final fiscal year of the last BNP government (2005-06), the final fiscal year of the previous

Awami League government (2023-24), and the interim government's fiscal year (2024-25).

Over 16 years, the fascist AL government drove the economy to the brink of collapse through rampant corruption and unchecked plunder, while rendering the social and institutional sectors dysfunctional, Khosru said.

In contrast, under the BNP government, the economy's key indicators had been placed on a positive trajectory thanks to its farsighted and people-oriented economic vision, accelerating the pace of growth.



Changes trigger fiery exchange

FROM PAGE 1

These stipulate that the minister or state minister of cultural affairs will serve as chairperson of the museum's board, replacing the earlier provision for an externally appointed expert.

Opposition MPs denounced the changes as a breach of trust, noting that a special parliamentary committee had earlier decided 98 of the 133 ordinances issued by the interim government, including the museum ordinance, would be ratified unchanged.

After the bill was passed by voice vote, opposition members objected, arguing the amendments would bring the museum under government control. Speaker Hafiz Uddin countered that objections to amendments must be submitted in advance.

Jamaat MP Mir Ahmad Bin Kasem Arman protested, saying, "How could we possibly submit objections under such circumstances? We had not received the bill beforehand and were unaware of the amendments." The Speaker then announced a recess for Maghrib prayer.

half an hour before the bill was tabled. "Anyone can propose amendments, and the opposition could have done so for all bills. But there was a consensus that no questions would be raised. Today the ruling party has broken that consensus in front of you. This is a breach of trust," he said.



He also alleged the government used its majority to push through the changes, calling it "trickery and outright deception in broad daylight". Speaker Hafiz Uddin asked State Minister for Cultural Affairs Ali Newaz Mahmud Khaiyam to respond to the allegations.

Newaz admitted consensus had been reached but said the amendments were

introduced by a member and he himself saw those just yesterday. He also offered justifications for the changes.

Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman acknowledged the allegation was partly true but stressed that any private member has the right to propose amendments, which could be revised in future sessions.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed echoed that the amendments did not originate from the government but from an individual lawmaker.

As tensions rose, the Speaker urged calm. "As the law minister said, there is a remedy if you are dissatisfied. I believe such discontent should not persist," he said.

At one point, NCP MP Hasnat Abdullah, a July uprising frontliner, shouted from the floor.

The Speaker rebuked him. "Such intolerance will not work, Mr Abdullah. This is not Shahbagh Square. This is parliament. Here you must wait patiently and listen," the Speaker said.

After prolonged exchanges, opposition MPs staged a walkout, protesting both the passage of the museum bill and the failure to ratify all 133 ordinances issued by the interim government.

44 of 94 ICU beds lie unused

FROM PAGE 1

though some have ICU equipment, they don't have trained manpower," he said.

Between 2020 and 2024, a total of 240 ICU beds were installed in 22 districts under the Covid-19 Emergency Response and Pandemic Preparedness (ERPP) Project, funded largely by the World Bank.

Over 1,000 staffers, including medical officers and technicians, were recruited to operate the units. However, after their contracts expired in December 2024, the government neither reappointed them nor made any new appointments.

Under the ERPP project, Rajshahi division received 94 ICU beds: 40 at RMCH, 10 each at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogura, Shaheed M Monsur Ali Medical College Hospital in Sirajganj, Chapainawabganj District Hospital, and Joypurhat District Modern Hospital; eight at Mohammad Ali Hospital in Bogura; and six at Sirajganj General Hospital.

Officials said 44 of these beds remain non-operational outside RMCH and Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital due to staff shortages. The paediatric ICU at RMCH has

been particularly strained. Authorities increased the number of ICU beds for children from 12 to 18 by reallocating resources for measles patients in critical condition.

"Only around 50 of the 94 ICU beds across the division are operational. The rest lie unused despite having equipment and infrastructure, as we lack manpower. We have repeatedly urged higher authorities to appoint staff," said the Rajshahi divisional health director.

Abu Hena Mostofa Kamal, in charge of RMCH's ICU, echoed him, saying the hospital faces overwhelming pressure because neighbouring districts lack trained personnel to run their ICUs. As a result, hundreds of patients from Rajshahi division, as well as Kushtia, Jhenaidah and Dinajpur, remain on waiting lists every month.

RMCH spokesperson Dr Shankar K Biswas said 119 children were admitted to the ICU last month, while 386 remained on the waiting list – 91 of them died before securing beds.

Among adults and elderly patients, 278 were admitted last month, while 614 were on the waiting list – 138 of whom died before getting ICU beds, he added.

RMCH authorities earlier this month sent a proposal to the health ministry seeking approval to establish a 100 bed ICU facility to address the crisis, Dr Shankar also said.

Health officials stressed the need for urgent measures, including fast-track recruitment, specialised ICU training, and decentralisation of critical care.

Without resolving the manpower crisis, ICU beds will continue to remain idle while patients die waiting for care that technically exists but remains inaccessible, they warned.

Dr Mozidul Islam, supervisor of Mohammad Ali Medical College Hospital in Bogura, said its eight-bed ICU has remained closed since the pandemic ended due to lack of staff.

Dr Akikun Nahar, superintendent of Sirajganj General Hospital, said the hospital's six ICU beds are also non-operational.

"We have the facilities but not the technical staff. We keep informing higher authorities, but no staff have been appointed yet," she said.

Repeated attempts to contact DGHS Director General Prof Dr Prabhat Chandra Biswas for comment were unsuccessful.

Dhaka South to plant 3 lakh trees in next five years

Says administrator
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) will be planting 3,00,000 trees over the next five years within areas under its jurisdiction, said Administrator Md Abdus Salam yesterday.

He was addressing the inauguration of a tree plantation programme as chief guest, organised with the support of Srijoni Bangladesh and held in the residential area of Dhaka University.

"There is no alternative to tree plantation. Therefore, the prime minister's nationwide tree plantation programme must be turned into a mass movement," he said.

Aligning with the PM's initiative, an ambitious plan has been adopted to plant a total of 3,00,000 trees between 2026 and

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Mulberry trees are in full bloom at the Rajshahi Silk Factory and Sericulture Research and Training Institute. Grown mainly for their leaves -- the primary food for silkworms -- the fruits are rich in vitamin C, iron, and antioxidants. Mulberries are now available locally, selling for around Tk 400 per kg.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

DSCC plans to turn waste into energy at Matuail

Urban planner warns waste-to-energy plan may not be feasible without proper research



DIPAN NANDY

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) plans to convert the Matuail landfill into a modern Resource Circulation Park, aiming to turn city waste into electricity, fuel, and fertiliser.

The initiative supports the government's "Clean City, Green City" vision, which aims to modernise waste management and curb environmental hazards.

On March 12, DSCC Administrator Abdus Salam met with a technical team from the South Korean firm B&F Company at Nagar Bhaban to review the master plan for this project.

Around 3,500 tonnes of waste are generated daily within the 109.24 square kilometre area under DSCC's jurisdiction, most of which ends up at the Matuail landfill.

The new project seeks to use advanced technology to repurpose this refuse.

Under the plan, an estimated 15,000 tonnes of methane will be extracted from nearly 100 acres of the landfill annually for generating electricity. Solar power will supplement the energy production.

At the same time, a pilot Material Recovery Facility is set to process 300 tonnes of household waste daily.

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BOGURA-6, SHERPUR-3

Jamaat seeks polls cancellation over 'irregularities'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday staged a protest rally in Dhaka, alleging widespread irregularities, including vote rigging, ballot stuffing, grabbing of polling centres, and attacks on opposition activists during the Sherpur-3 parliamentary election and the Bogura-6 by-poll.

The elections to the two constituencies were held on April 9. BNP candidates won in both seats.

The rally was held at the north gate of the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque after Juma prayers, followed by a protest procession that marched through Paltan intersection and ended at Bijoynagar roundabout.

Speaking at the event as chief guest, the party's secretary general, Mia Golam Porwar, termed the elections in the two constituencies "farical" and demanded cancellation of the results.

"The scale of vote rigging, occupation of polling centres, ballot stuffing, and attacks on opposition leaders and activists in the first election under the BNP's tenure has surpassed even that of the Awami League regime," Porwar said.

He alleged that despite media reports on irregularities and attacks on opposition activists, the chief election commissioner "made a mockery of the nation" by claiming the polls were fair.

Referring to the referendum, the Jamaat leader said the BNP had pledged before the national elections to fully implement its outcome if it won. "But after forming the

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Of smoke, soot, and suffering

Factory emissions blanket eight villages in Khulna's Rupsha, harming crops, fish, public health

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Toxic emissions from a factory in Rupsha upazila of Khulna have been causing environmental pollution in at least eight neighbouring villages.

The fumes originate from Mimco Carbon Company Limited, an export-oriented factory beside Padma Beel in Tilak village. Established in 2013 on around 45 bighas of land by a businessman from Jamalpur, the factory was inaugurated in March that year by Mannujan Sufian, then state minister for labour and employment.

After operations were halted due to loan default, the factory was later leased from a bank and is now being run by local businessman Shahjahan Shikari and his nephew Masum Billah Shikari.

Locals said since the factory began operations, vast stretches of cropland, fish ponds and residential areas have repeatedly been blanketed by soot and ash from fumes emitted by its furnaces, which operate without emission control, particularly in the evening and at night.

They said the pollution has severely affected the predominantly agricultural area spanning Tilak, Amdabad, Machuadanga, Nohati, Debipur, Samantashena, Patharghata, Godaikhali and other nearby villages.

Padma Beel, covering around

140 hectares, is a vital agricultural zone, with nearly 110 hectares under cultivation.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found the factory producing carbon black in 42 furnaces by burning jute sticks, while 18 more furnaces were under construction.

Despite being only two to three kilometres from the upazila

Many believe the factory operates with the backing of influential quarters.

"In recent years, many people here have developed asthma, heart disease and chronic respiratory conditions due to prolonged exposure to the toxic fumes released from the factory's furnaces every evening," said Hosne Ara Banu, a resident of Tilak village.



parishad and within one kilometre of more than six educational institutions, the factory has continued operating for years amid a lack of effective monitoring by the authorities concerned, villagers alleged.

Despite repeated protests, human chains and press conferences, no steps have been taken in this regard, locals said.

Children are the worst affected, she added.

Farmer Gaffar Sheikh of Debipur village said the pollution has adversely affected crop production.

"We no longer get expected yields. Paddy plants die; tomato and gourd production has declined as flowers wither prematurely. The ash settles in fish ponds, reducing

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BNP begins sale of nomination forms for women's reserved seats

Over 500 ones taken on first day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP yesterday initiated its internal selection process for candidates in the election to the women's reserved seats in the 13th National Parliament by beginning sale of party nomination forms.

The election is slated for May 12.

BNP senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi inaugurated the sale of nomination forms at the party's Nayapaltan central office around 11:00am.

The nomination forms would be sold till Sunday and would also have to be submitted within the same period.

Addressing the aspirants, Rizvi said BNP's parliamentary board would take the final decision after assessing all relevant factors, including the aspirants' political records, role in the party's movements over the past 16-17 years, personal competence, speaking ability in parliament and other necessary aspects.

Rizvi urged the aspirants to accept the party's decision in a disciplined manner and avoid creating any disagreement over the final nominations.

"There should not be any unpleasant situation arising if one person gets nomination while another does not," he said.

"You have all endured much hardship and pain for the party. So, I firmly believe you will accept the party's decision," he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Army chief returns home from US

STAR REPORT

Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman returned home yesterday after an official visit to the US.

During the visit, he took part in various programmes in Georgia and held meetings with important personalities, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The ISPR said the Georgia state authorities handed him a special resolution in recognition of the commendable contributions of Bangladeshi peacekeepers to UN peacekeeping missions.

The statement also said a number of bilateral meetings were held during the visit, where issues of mutual interest between Bangladesh and the US were discussed.



BANGLADESHI STUDENTS Malaysia considers more scholarships

STAR REPORT

Malaysia has expressed readiness to consider expanding scholarship allocations for Bangladeshi students under existing and future higher education programmes.

Malaysian Minister for Higher Education Zamby Abdul Kadir conveyed the interest during a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister's Adviser on Education, Labour, and Employment Mahdi Amin yesterday.

Minister for Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Ariful Haque Chowdhury also attended the meeting, according to a press release from the Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia.

Discussions focused on strengthening cooperation in higher education, research collaboration, skills development, and workforce mobility, with emphasis on expanding

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PHOTO: COURTESY

Light classical music evening 'Thumri' performers take to the stage at Bengal Shilpalay in Dhaka's Dhanmondi area yesterday evening.

Bengal Foundation hosts evening of 'thumri'

CITY DESK

Bengal Foundation organised a light classical music evening titled "Thumri" at Bengal Shilpalay in Dhaka's Dhanmondi area yesterday evening, celebrating the rich heritage of North Indian semi-classical music traditions.

The programme featured performances of thumri, chaiti, kajri and dhun by vocalists Susmita Debnath (Suchi), Abhijit Kundu and Mirajul Jannat Sonia. They were accompanied by sarangi player Shounak Debnath Rik and sarod artist Ilham Fuljhuri Khan, according to a Bengal Foundation press release.

The musical accompaniment was provided by Iftekhar Alam Pradhan on tabla and Bijon Chandra Mistry on harmonium, both senior scholars of Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Schoolgirl found unconscious in classroom

Doctors suspect sexual assault

UNB, Kushtia

An 11-year-old girl was rescued in an unconscious state from a school classroom in Mirpur upazila of Kushtia on Thursday night, with doctors suspecting sexual assault.

The girl, a sixth grader, had gone to her school earlier in the day to attend a farewell programme for the Secondary School Certificate 2026 batch, according to police and local sources.

As she did not return home after the programme, her family members began searching for her.

They said that around 8:00pm, they contacted the school peon, who initially claimed no one was inside the school and refused to hand over the keys.

Growing suspicious, locals took the keys and entered the building, where they found the girl unconscious in a room on the second floor.

The victim was first taken to a health complex and later shifted to a Kushtia hospital for better treatment.

The hospital sources said necessary samples were collected. "Preliminary examination suggests signs of sexual assault," said a doctor, adding that further tests are underway.

After regaining consciousness, the girl told journalists that she had been sitting near the stairs but could not remember anything beyond that.

Officer-in-Charge Shahidul Islam of Mirpur Police Station said police detained the peon and another school employee yesterday for interrogation.



Make shift vendors continue operating beside the Dhaka Elevated Expressway in the Banani area despite ongoing eviction drives. These illegal structures resume engulfing roads, even overtaking City Corporation facilities. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Confce on 'nation and its imaginations' concludes at IUB



CITY DESK

A two-day international conference "The Nation & Its Imaginations", organised by the Department of Media and Communication under the School of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences (SLASS) at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), concluded on the university's Dhaka campus yesterday, said a press release.

The inaugural session on April 9 was attended by Prof M Tamim, vice-chancellor of IUB; Prof Daniel W Lund, pro-VC; and Prof Bokhtiar Ahmed, dean of SLASS, among others.

The opening day keynote was delivered by Prof Craig Batty, pro-VC of the College of Creative Arts, Design and Humanities at the University of Adelaide, Australia, focusing on creative practice and research innovation. The second day began with a keynote by Prof Lund, who addressed the relationship between media, audience perception and cognitive dissonance.

LURING WITH 'FAMILY CARD' Faridpur man arrested over rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday arrested the lone accused in a rape case filed in Faridpur over luring a widow with the promise of a "family card."

The arrestee, Suján Sheikh, 35, of West Alipur in Faridpur town, was picked up from Rani Cottage area in Hazaribagh around 4:00pm, said a Rab press release signed by Rab-10 Assistant Director (Media) Senior ASP Tapas Karmakar.

Acting on a tip-off and using information technology, a Rab-10 team, assisted by its Lallbagh camp, conducted the drive and detained Suján.

According to the case statement, on April 2 Suján allegedly took the 43-year-old widow to a residential hotel near the old bus stand in Goalchamat area of Faridpur town, promising to arrange a family card, and raped her.

The victim filed the case with Faridpur Kotwali Police Station on April 8 under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, naming Suján as the sole accused.

Bengal Foundation hosts

FROM PAGE 3
Distinguished classical musician and educator Pandit Anil Kumar Saha attended the event as a guest. He is a faculty member at Shanto-Mariam University and has received 18 years of training in classical music under Ustad A Daud Khan in India. He holds a Master of Music degree with a gold medal from Banga Sangeet Parishad, affiliated with Rabindra Bharati University.

As an artist, he has been awarded the Citycell-Channel i Music Award twice. He is also the author of two books on music, "Sangeet Proshok" and "Sur Nirjhor", and served as a member of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) music curriculum development committee.

Historically, regions such as Raipur, Lucknow, Gaya and Varanasi were important centres of thumri in the northern Indian subcontinent, where folk influences shaped forms like thumri, kajri, chaiti and hori. In Bengal, the spread of thumri in the 19th century is closely associated with Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Lucknow, who was exiled by the British to Metiabruz in Kolkata in 1857. A patron of the arts, he composed numerous bandishes under the pen name 'Kadar Piya.'

Other notable figures include Bhaiyasaheb Ganpat Rao of the Gwalior royal family, who composed under the name 'Sughar Piya,' and celebrated vocalist Muizuddin Khan of Punjab. Their presence in Kolkata, along with Wajid Ali Shah's court of musicians, marked a significant chapter in the development of thumri in the region.

Bengal Foundation has also published selected thumri, kajri and chaiti performances by artists including Shubhra Guha, Girija Devi, Ajoy Chakrabarty, Priyanka Gope, Rashid Khan, Kaushiki Chakrabarty and Suchishree Ray, which are available on its YouTube channel.

BNP begins sale

FROM PAGE 3
Rizvi, who also serves as an adviser to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, handed over the first nomination form to Zareen Delwar.

He later distributed forms to several other aspirants, including Nipun Roy Chowdhury, Arifa Sultana Ruma, Sabina Khan, Shawkat Ara Akhter, Rokeya Chowdhury Baby, Mina Begum, Farida Yasmin, Meherunnesa Haque and Peyara Mostofa.

On the first day, over 500 nomination forms were collected by aspirants, said BNP Media Cell member Shayrul Kabir Khan.

Aspirants expressed confidence that the party would properly evaluate their contributions with due consideration, adding that they would accept the party's decision.

Several hundred women leaders of BNP gathered at the Nayapaltan office to collect forms. Many stood in queues and paid Tk 2,000 each to obtain the receipt required for the form.

Earlier, the Election Commission on Wednesday

announced the schedule for the election to the women's reserved seats.

As per the schedule, nomination papers may be submitted until April 21, while scrutiny will take place on April 22-23. Appeals against the scrutiny decision may be filed on April 26, and those appeals will be disposed of on April 27-28. Symbols will be allotted to the final candidates on April 30.

The EC said all necessary preparations to hold the election in a peaceful and orderly manner have been completed.

According to the seat distribution, the BNP-led alliance will receive 36 reserved seats, the Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-party alliance will receive 13, while independents will get one.

PRAYER TIMING
APRIL 11

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:35	12:45	4:45	6:24	7:45
JAMAAT 5:10	1:15	5:00	6:28	8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Idol, furniture vandalised at temples

OUR CORRESPONDENT, City

Unidentified individuals have allegedly vandalised an idol and stolen gold ornaments from a Hindu temple in Rangunia upazila in Chattogram, while another nearby temple has also been reportedly attacked.

The incident occurred between 7:00pm on Thursday and 6:00am yesterday in the Burir Dokan area, according to police.

Manik Kanti Das, general secretary of the Rangunia upazila Janmashtami Uddjan Parishad, said miscreants entered the Ma Magadheshwari Temple, vandalised the deity and took gold ornaments.

He also alleged that a nearby Shiva temple was attacked, with furniture and images damaged.

Police inspected both temples, and a case was filed with Rangunia Model Police Station, said OC Md Arman Hossain, adding that an investigation is underway.

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Malaysia considers

FROM PAGE 3
scholarships and improving integration of Bangladeshi students in Malaysian society.

Mahdi stressed the need for professional exposure and development opportunities for Bangladeshi students and graduates.

Minister Zambry acknowledged the proposal, expressing willingness to explore supportive frameworks aligned with Malaysia's international education policies.

Mahdi emphasised university-to-university partnerships, expanding academic exchange programmes, and developing joint educational schemes supported by Malaysian

institutions, with a focus on transparent selection processes and long-term sustainability.

He urged for stronger institutional mechanisms to support student inclusion, community engagement, and access to support services, ensuring that Bangladeshi students can thrive within Malaysian society.

Malaysia currently hosts over 11,000 Bangladeshi students, mostly in private institutions. Both sides discussed expanding mutually recognised qualifications, joint degree programmes, distance education, and flexible learning pathways, while aligning academic programmes with labour market needs.

IN LOVING MEMORY
Of
BEGUM SHAMSUNNAHER KHAWAJA AHSANULLAH
Ex-Member of Parliament (BNP)
DAUGHTER-IN-LAW OF NAWAB SIR SALIMULLAH BAHAUDR
ON HER 1ST DEATH ANNIVERSARY
11TH APRIL 2025

One year has passed since she returned to her Creator, but her love, care, and memories remain forever in our hearts. We pray to Almighty Allah (SWT) to forgive her, grant her Jannatul Ferdous, fill her grave with noor, and bless her soul with eternal peace. Ameen. Kindly remember her in your duas and recite Surah Al-Fatiha for her Maghfrifrah.

Remembered with love.
From
Her son **Khawaja Zaki Ahsanullah**, Daughters **Fawzia Hossain**, **Ayesha Alam** and grandchildren

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১	প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম	২৯ ই বেংগল (সাত ব্যাটা), শহীদ সাল্লাহউদ্দিন সেনানিবাস।
২	কাজের বিবরণ	২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বছরের বাজেট কোড নং ১১৯০৬০১/১২০০০৭৮০১/৩২৫৭৩০৩ অপারেশন কমিনজেনী খাত হতে আভিমানিক ও নিরাপত্তা সক্ষমতা বৃদ্ধিকরণ কাজে বিভিন্ন দ্রব্যসামগ্রী ক্রয়, রক্ষণাবেক্ষণ এবং এতদসংক্রান্ত বিবিধ ব্যয় নির্বাহ।
৩	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের তারিখ	১২ এপ্রিল ২০২৬।
৪	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ	০৩ মে ২০২৬ তারিখ ১০০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
৫	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ	০৩ মে ২০২৬ তারিখ ১৩০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।

আই এস পি আর/সেনা/৩০৩
অধিদায়ক
২৯ ই বেংগল (সাত ব্যাটা)

AHQ, E IN C'S BRANCH, WORKS DIRECTORATE, DHAKA CANTONMENT
INVITATION FOR TENDERS

Notice no. 300/Ad/68/E-3/36 Dated: 02 April 2026

MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES

1.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Defence				
2.	Agency	Military Engineer Services				
3.	Procuring Entity Name	E in C				
4.	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka				
5.	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)				
6.	Budget and source of Funds	GOB				
7.	Development Partners (if applicable)	None				
8.	Project / Programme Name (if applicable)	Establishment of Airmen Training Institute at BAF Base Zahurul Haque in Chattogram.				
9.	Selling of tender will commence from	12 April 2026 (During Office hour).				
10.	Selling of tender will Close on	22 April 2026 (During Office hour).				
11.	Last date & time of submission of Tender	23 April 2026 at 1200 hours.				
12.	Date & time of opening of Tender	23 April 2026 at 1230 hours.				
13.	Name & Address of the Office(s)	- Selling Tender Document Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka & AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment. - Receiving Tender Document Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka - Opening Tender Document Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka				
14.	Eligibility of Tenderer	a. On receipt of security clearance, MES approved cement manufacturer organization may apply for tender. b. Having experience of similar work mentioned in Lot No 15(a) amounting Tk. 67,40,000.00 in a single tender during last 05 (Five) years.				
15.	Brief Description of Works					
Lot No	Identification of Lot	Location	Price of Tender Document (Non Refundable)	Tender Security in the form of Bank Draft/ Pay order in favour of AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantt. (Taka)	Completion Time in weeks/ Months	
1	a.	Supply of 818.00 Metric tons cement in Bag (OPC) including loading, unloading, carrying & stacking at construction site (ATT) and SDO F/S store yard under GE (Air) Chattogram.	GE (Air) Chattogram	2,000.00	2,85,000.00	04 (Four) Months
16.	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Director of Works				
17.	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Director of Works				
18.	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Army Headquarters, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment. Web address : www.army.mil.bd				
19.	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Tel No. 9832870	Fax No. 9832882	e-mail- wkdsde@army.mil.bd		
20.	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders					

আই এস পি আর/সেনা/৩০৩

XEN E/M
For Director of Works
Works Directorate
Engineer in Chief's Branch
Dhaka Cantonment
Tel: Mili: 8711111 Ext: 2886
Civil: 9832886

রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি
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উত্তম সেবার নিত্যসত্য

নাটোর কর্পোরেট শাখা, নাটোর শাখা স্থানান্তর

রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি'র নাটোর কর্পোরেট শাখা ১২ এপ্রিল ২০২৬, রবিবার থেকে নতুন ঠিকানায় স্থানান্তরিত হয়ে ব্যাংকিং কার্যক্রম শুরু করছে

পুরাতন ঠিকানা	বর্তমান ঠিকানা
রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি নাটোর কর্পোরেট শাখা মকবুল পুজা ঢাকা-নাটোর মহাসড়ক নাটোর সদর, নাটোর।	রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি নাটোর কর্পোরেট শাখা এ.কে.টাওয়ার, হোল্ডিং নং-০৮৪৩-০০ ঢাকা-নাটোর মহাসড়ক নাটোর সদর, নাটোর।

সম্মানিত গ্রাহক, পৃষ্ঠপোষক এবং শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের ব্যাংকিং সেবা গ্রহণের জন্য নতুন ঠিকানায় যোগাযোগের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

TALKS IN PAKISTAN Hormuz toll plan key point of contention

AFP, Paris

Iran's imposition of a toll for ships to pass through the Strait of Hormuz looks set to be a key point of contention at talks opening in Pakistan.

While Iran agreed to reopen the thoroughfare during the two-week truce with the United States, it has also spoken of a toll system to fund reconstruction following punishing US-Israeli attacks.

The European Union was quick to denounce the idea Thursday. Bloomberg News has reported that shipping companies would be expected to pay up to \$2 million per vessel.

The Financial Times said the price to pay would be a dollar a barrel of oil, paid in crypto-currency or yuan, China's currency.

One of the points on the 10-point plan for ending



the war that Iran sent to Washington was that Tehran would maintain control of the Strait of Hormuz.

"Paying a toll legitimises Iran's coercion and sets a precedent under international law that other regimes may want to pursue," wrote Guntram Wolff, senior researcher at the Brussels-based Bruegel think tank.

Trump has suggested that the US and Iran could run the system in a "joint venture".

Hormuz has become "more important for Iran than enriched uranium", Amir Handjari, an analyst with the US Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, told AFP.

"That's the real security guarantee to prevent Israeli and US attacks in the future," he argued.



Mourners gather around the bodies of people killed earlier this week in Israeli airstrikes on Abbasiyeh, during a funeral in Tyre, southern Lebanon, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

US bases in Gulf 'useless' after strikes

Middle East expert says US Fifth Fleet 'highly unlikely' to return to Bahrain

AGENCIES

At least a dozen US military sites across the Gulf region have been so badly damaged by Iran's retaliation to US and Israeli attacks that their presence now creates significantly more vulnerabilities than it does benefits, a slate of Middle East experts argued on Thursday.

The original revelation about the state of the bases was first reported in The New York Times last month, in which they were described as "all but uninhabitable". The Trump administration has yet to acknowledge the extent of the damage sustained.

"This is the physical architecture of American primacy, and Iran has essentially rendered it useless in the span of a month," Marc Lynch, director of the Project on Middle East Political Science at George Washington

University, said at the Arab Center Washington DC's annual conference.

"We are not seeing a full and accurate reporting of the extent of damage that has been done to US bases in the region," he added.

Access to these sites - some of which are logistical hubs and not necessarily active bases - is tightly controlled by both the Pentagon and the Gulf states themselves: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman, reports Middle East Eye online.

Gulf leaders had previously pledged not to permit the US to use bases on their territory for the war.

"The bases around the region are suffering real damage, and I think it's very unlikely that we're ever going to go back and put our Fifth Fleet back in Bahrain. It's too vulnerable," Lynch added.



PHOTO: REUTERS

A firefighter works at the site of a Russian drone strike near Konotop in Ukraine's Sumy region yesterday. A separate Russian artillery strike and aerial attack killed two people in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region.

Iran truce may be too late for many African countries

Fuel surge, trade obstruction cause fertiliser shortages

CNN ONLINE

In northern Malawi, Sutey Williams Nsamba is struggling to buy fertiliser for his small farm, where he grows corn, groundnuts and tobacco. The war in Iran sent living costs soaring, and he warns if shipping disruption continues into Malawi's crop-growing season in November, a "devastating low yield" is inevitable.

"The prices of many commodities will rise, and life will be unbearable," he told CNN.

Nsamba's struggles echo across Africa, with economies hit hard as fuel prices surge and the obstruction of trade routes leads to shortages

of fertiliser during the key planting season.

The two-week ceasefire announced between the United States and Iran brings hope, but even if it holds, few expect a swift return to normality.

Aliko Dangote, the owner of Africa's largest oil refinery in Nigeria, told CNN last month that it may take several months for oil prices to stabilize.

While nowhere has been spared the impact of the Iran war, African countries - which rely heavily on imports of fuel, food, and fertilizer - are especially vulnerable.

Simon Mulongo, a former special

African Union envoy to Somalia and the Sahel, told CNN that the temporary ceasefire has come too late to ease the hardships faced by African nations confronting rising resource prices.

"It is late and uneven," he said, leaving some oil-importing countries on the continent dealing with "currency pressure, subsidy strain, and rising pump prices."

Across Africa, fuel prices have surged by as much as 15 percent to 40 percent, further straining already struggling economies.

In Malawi, petrol prices have risen by 34 percent, while jet fuel prices jumped by 81 percent.

"They're stupid people, they know it, their families know it, and everyone else knows it, too!"
Trump slams right-wing commentators who oppose Iran war

Israel approves 34 new West Bank settlements

AFP, Ramallah

Israel has approved the establishment of 34 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, according to Israeli media reports and the watchdog Peace Now, which said the decision was taken "secretly" in early April.

"The security cabinet secretly decided to establish 34 new settlements," Peace Now said in a statement released late on Thursday.

The 34 settlements come on top of 68 others already approved since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government came to power in 2022.

The decision has not been officially published by any government body, and the defence ministry, in charge of settlements in the occupied West Bank, declined to respond to AFP's questions.

"We are not addressing this issue," a spokesperson for the ministry told AFP.

According to news channel i24News, 10 of the 34 settlements are already existing outposts, which are illegal under Israeli law, but will now be retroactively legalised under the decision.

The remaining 24 are yet to be built. All settlements are illegal under international law.

News website Ynet reported that military chief Eyal Zamir warned during the security cabinet meeting that took place on April 1 that the army could "collapse" because of increasing demands on its manpower.

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(Mechanical Engineering Wing)
Head Office, Dhaka-1000.

Invitation for Tender (Goods & related works) through Web.

1	Procuring Entity	Common Services Department-2, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka-1000.
2	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
3	Invitation ref. No. & Date	CSD-2(MES): 14/1(generator)/2026-264 Date: 09/04/2026
4	Source of Funds	Bangladesh Bank's own fund.
5	Name of the work	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 500 KVA Diesel Generator at Bangladesh Bank Barishal office, Barishal.
6	Tender Last selling Date	The Tender documents may be obtained from the office of the Director (Engineering-E/M), Common Services Department-2, Bangladesh Bank (7th floor of 30th storied Building), Head Office, Dhaka on payment of Tk.1000/- (Taka One Thousand) only (Non-refundable) per set during office hours on or before 22/04/2026 upto 4.00 pm.
7	Address of the web for submission e-tender.	etender.bb.org.bd
8	Last date & time of submission through web	23/04/2026 on or before 3:00PM.
9	Last Date & Time and Name & Address of the office for receiving Original tender security and other documents	23/04/2026 on or before 3: 15 PM Director (Engineering-E/M), Common Services Department-2 (7th floor of 30th storied Building), Bangladesh Bank, Head office, Dhaka-1000.
10	Name & Address of the office Opening Tender.	Director (Engineering-E/M), Common Services Department-2 (7th floor of 30 storied Building), Bangladesh Bank, Head office, Dhaka-1000 on 23/04/2026 at 3.30 PM. (intending tenders or their authorized representatives are allowed to attend the tender opening).
11	Eligibility of the Tenderer	(a) Tenderer shall have minimum 10 (Ten) years of general experience in the supply of goods and related services. (b) Tenderer shall have agency/distributorship/authorization from Manufacturer of the proposed brand Generator. (c) Tenderer shall have specific experience for supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of power generator installed in any Govt./Semi-Govt./Autonomous organization worth not less than Tk. 2.10 crore only in single contracts in the last 05 (five) years. (d) The minimum amount of liquid asset i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the Tenderer shall be Tk 2.50 crore. In case of credit facilities, Bank shall ensure that the above mentioned credit limit will be given if the said work is awarded to the contractor. (e) The Tenderer shall have to furnish the certificate in this respect from an officer not below the rank of Executive Engineer or equivalent and shall meet all other criteria, terms & conditions as specified in the tender documents without which the tender will not be considered.
12	Tender Security	Tender Security amounting BDT 7.90 Lac only will be required in the form of Pay Order/Bank Draft/Bank Guarantee in favour of Director (Engineering-E/M), Common Services Department-2, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka.
13	Work completion Time	09 (Nine) months from the date of Award of Contract.
14	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Sudhangshu Kumar Sarker, Director (Engineering-E/M), Common Services Department-2 (7th floor, 30th storied Building), Bangladesh Bank, Head office, Dhaka-1000.
15	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Phone: 88-02-9530099, Fax: +88-029530490.
16	Special Instructions	(i) The Tenderer shall submit the tender through Bangladesh Bank Website (e-Tendering) & shall have a valid e-mail address for participating in e-Tendering. (ii) Original PO/BD/BG as Tender Security has to be send to Director (Engineering-E/M), Common Services Department-2 within stipulated date and time of TDS. (iii) Scanned copy of the tender security shall be submitted with the tender through web. (iv) Tenderer shall submit the documentary evidence etc. (attested or original whichever necessary) at the time of Tender opening or when required, failing which the Tender may be considered as non-responsive. (v) Tenderer shall duly fill in the Form PG3-1 (Tender Submission Letter) and Form PG3-2 (Tenderer Information) as per format given in Tender Document. (vi) PG3-1 form will be completed and signed by the Authorized Signatory on the Letter-Head Pad, attached by scanning during submitting tender and original will have to send to Director (Engineering-E/M), CSD-2 at scheduled time as per TDS. (vii) Furnishing of any false, misleading documents shall result in rejection of the tender and may lead to action under Rule 149 of the Public Procurement Rules, 2025. (viii) All sorts of Security and Safety measures shall be carried out by the Contractor during execution of the work. (ix) Bangladesh Bank reserves all right to accept or reject any or all the tender without assigning any reason whatsoever. No claim will be entertained in this regard.

DCP-48/2026-831
Date : 09/04/2026

ব্যংকিং ও আর্থিক সেবা পেতে, হয়রানির শিকার হলে কিংবা কোনো অভিযোগ থাকলে ১৬২৩৬ নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

(Sudhangshu Kumar Sarker)
Director (Engineering-E/M)
Phone 02-9530490

GD-800

A much-awaited verdict

ICT ruling in Abu Sayed case marks a vital step towards justice for July killings

This was one of those cases that always seemed likely to be resolved sooner than most others being tried at the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) following the July uprising, not just because of its seemingly open and shut nature, but also because of what it symbolised: a defining moment of accountability for one of the uprising's most significant episodes. Abu Sayed's killing on July 16, 2024, as he stood with his arms outstretched before a marauding group of cops, became a turning point that transformed the movement from one of quota reform to a revolt against state repression and eventually ousted Sheikh Hasina's autocratic regime. On Thursday, ICT-2 sentenced two former policemen to death, for directly shooting Abu Sayed, and 28 others to various jail terms in this connection. This is a moment worth reflecting on.

By holding not only those who pulled the triggers but also others accountable under the doctrine of command responsibility and complicity, the tribunal has reinforced an essential principle: that abuses of power, especially against unarmed citizens, cannot go unanswered regardless of the perpetrators' rank or position. In doing so, it has offered a measure of institutional response to a crime that came to symbolise the total breakdown of law, accountability, and trust in the very institutions meant to protect citizens.

This is the fourth judgment in cases filed on charges of crimes against humanity committed during the uprising, with two each delivered by ICT-1 and ICT-2. While reactions have naturally varied—from the victim's family and co-protesters expressing relief but also a sense that those higher up the chain of command have not been punished sufficiently, to the defence signalling its intent to appeal upon review of the full judgment—the verdict has nonetheless reopened the conversation on accountability for the July killings. However, the fact that only six of the 30 convicted were present in the dock to receive the judgment, with the rest remaining absconding, has raised concerns about whether it can be implemented fully. The credibility of this process will depend a lot on whether those still beyond reach are brought to justice.

The ICT's ruling is more than a legal conclusion in one case, however. It is part of a wider undertaking to assign accountability and offer some closure to wounds that still remain politically and emotionally raw. It is, therefore, vital that we don't remain fixated on the symbolism of convictions. The consistency and fairness with which justice is pursued across all cases arising from the uprising are of equal importance, especially amid allegations of impropriety levelled against a section of the tribunal's prosecution in recent times as well as questions surrounding the lengthy pre-trial detentions of some of the accused. Without sustained institutional follow-through, there is a risk that even landmark verdicts may come to be seen as inadequately reached.

Finally, this moment is also a clarion call for the authorities to ensure that the conditions and failures that led to a tragedy like Abu Sayed's are never repeated. Otherwise, the lessons of July 2024 may fade without truly being learned.

Piloting hybrid classes a good move

Parents', students' concerns should be considered

Amid an ongoing energy crisis, the government is set to introduce a blended learning model in selected schools in Dhaka from Saturday, combining physical and online classes in an effort to reduce energy consumption. Students will attend physical classes on Saturdays, Mondays, and Wednesdays, while classes will be held online on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. This schedule will not be applicable to primary schools. Given our previous experience of fully online classes during the pandemic, it will be prudent for the government to assess the pilot project's effectiveness carefully and in detail before making broader decisions about primary schools and institutions outside the capital.

Earlier cabinet-level discussions explored ways to adjust academic schedules to save energy while ensuring continuity in education. While the blended model has emerged as one option, it has faced resistance from stakeholders. At a recent seminar attended by the education minister and the state minister for primary and mass education, students, teachers, guardians, and educationists opposed the reintroduction of online classes at this stage. They argued that remote learning risks widening learning gaps and cannot match the effectiveness of in-person teaching. Teachers, too, raised concerns about student engagement, assessment, and maintaining instructional quality in a hybrid format.

During the pandemic, prolonged school closures exposed deep structural weaknesses in our education system. Many students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and even many in urban areas, struggled with access, logistical support, and learning continuity. Studies show that learning losses from that period have remained largely unaddressed. A 2022 Education Watch report found that most students did not receive adequate remedial support when schools reopened after the pandemic, while a large proportion had to rely on private tuition to catch up. The current situation differs in that the energy crisis is not as much of an emergency as the pandemic was, nor is it as out-of-control. Still, reintroducing online classes, even partially, must not reproduce the aforementioned inequalities.

We appreciate the government's restrained approach to introducing a hybrid model and its awareness in including only well-established schools with large student populations in the pilot programme. Nevertheless, we urge authorities to ensure adequate logistical support, including reliable electricity and internet access for all students. Equally important is proper teacher training to make online instruction effective. The success of blended learning relies on infrastructure, teacher preparedness, and digital access—areas where gaps still persist. Unless these are addressed, hybrid education risks creating further inequalities in education.

BLENDED LEARNING IN AN ENERGY CRISIS

Innovation or institutional amnesia?

BLOWIN' IN THE WIND



Dr. Shamsad Mortuza
is vice-chancellor of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB).

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

"My classroom has four ceiling fans, but if we are to attend online classes from home, we will need 50 fans."

This social media post from a schoolboy has the potential to become a textbook arithmetical problem or a sequel to the *Emperor's New Clothes*. The simplicity of the comment reminds us how grown-ups obsessed with the big picture often miss out on smaller things. The boy was reacting to the government's move to switch to blended learning, splitting the week between three days of in-person and virtual classes each. By any measure, this plan is a policy born of constraint: shortage of fuel, spikes in fuel costs, and thickening traffic congestion. It probably offers a pragmatic solution by reducing the physical attendance of students in selected schools and digitising learning for those with the necessary infrastructure to keep the system running. But beneath the pragmatism lies a repetition of unresolved failures of Covid-era experimentation with remote learning. As this pilot programme is rolled out, the government must decide whether it is a pedagogical reform or an ad hoc adaptive innovation.

The education minister, when announcing the pilot programme, was right to point out that every crisis offers an opportunity. But before bringing in changes to our rigid schooling system, we need to analyse the risks and benefits further. After all, as the boy quoted earlier has shown, in energy terms, the solution redistributes demand rather than suppressing it. True, by halving physical attendance, the plan has the potential of reducing peak-hour congestion in cities like Dhaka. But is the traffic or communication problem the same in small towns and villages? If there is a plan to scale the model to include less urban areas in the future, adopting a national policy based on urban experiences would by no means be wise.

During our romance with blended learning, we saw the benefits of pedagogical diversification. We introduced our teachers to various digital platforms, trained them with asynchronous learning, and encouraged them to use multimedia content and adopt self-paced engagement. These features are still largely absent in conventional classrooms. The energy crisis can help us return to the digital

institutionalisation that began during the pandemic and accelerate the integration of technology into education. However, the problem with these initiatives is that the promised benefits are conditional. To benefit from the transition to online teaching, we need institutional infrastructure, continuous professional training, and socioeconomic readiness. Focusing on selected schools will expose the structural inequality as well as the digital divide. The immediate concern is far from technological; it involves our socioeconomic reality. According to a 2021 national survey, only 18.7 percent of children participated in remote learning during pandemic



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

closures, with rural participation dropping to 15.9 percent and primary-level engagement to a mere 13.1 percent. These are not marginal gaps; they are systemic exclusions.

Our previous brush with blended learning made us aware of a two-speed education system: one for digitally equipped, urban, middle-class students, and another for those without devices, connectivity, or conducive home environments. The minister's "voluntary" framing, by urging "capable institutions" to opt in, may make resource-heavy institutions feel obligated. Elite schools will adopt and adapt under compulsion, while under-resourced institutions will lag to widen inequality.

Central to the teaching model lies teacher preparedness. Unless teachers are aware of online instructional design, assessment, and engagement, this system is likely to fail. This is

evident in the candid comment of a newly recruited teacher. With no experience with online classes, the teacher is worried about sustaining student attention and rightly so. Digital classrooms require a different set of protocols and etiquette. Many students may not have the required bandwidth, data, or gadgets for an entire school day. And if the camera is off, it is impossible to know what the student is doing on the other side of the black mirror. Engaging them online is a skill attained through training on digital pedagogy, content development, and instructional technology. Otherwise, online classes risk becoming passive lecture broadcasts with minimal interaction. In the worst-case scenario, classes become symbolic exercises to satisfy policy compliance without delivering learning outcomes.

The pilot policy must consider the household economy of education. For primary-level students, online learning requires adult supervision. Most households in the city rely on dual incomes. So, the policy must address the issue of working parents who

screen time, many students suffer from attention deficiency. The new model could impact social learning, formative assessment, and teacher-student rapport.

The absence of structured feedback loops during the pandemic led to significant learning loss, controversially complemented by an auto-pass decree. The assessment integrity was compromised because few schools have plagiarism software, and it was impossible to know who was doing the students' homework. Reintroducing a hybrid model without addressing these deficits risks normalising suboptimal learning outcomes.

But the greatest irony of all is that this solution addresses an energy crisis by increasing reliance on electricity-dependent digital systems. The policy assumes that all students of "capable schools" have reliable household electricity, uninterrupted internet access, and device availability. But given the prevalence of load shedding, unstable internet connectivity, and device scarcity, it is possible to guarantee that all students can join synchronous online classes?

Then there are the invisible concerns of exposing students to online spaces at an early stage. It would be interesting to see what measures the government has taken in terms of data security, student privacy, and platform dependency. What about the mental well-being of students who may be affected by the isolationist nature of online teaching? How about students with different needs? In many households, girls may face disproportionate domestic responsibilities during home-based learning days. Furthermore, a policy piloted in Dhaka may not translate to rural contexts, yet its eventual scaling could ignore these differences. Instead of seeing blended learning as a stopgap measure, the government must think of systemic transformation, aiming for a phased implementation of digital learning. It can start with higher education and senior secondary levels, where digital readiness is relatively higher. Teachers' certification in digital pedagogy should be made mandatory as this policy is rolled out. The implementation will require infrastructure investment, like subsidies on devices and internet, as well as availability of reliable power solutions.

While the government is right to insist that education must not stall in times of crisis, it must also admit that continuity without quality is a hollow achievement. The risk is not that blended learning will fail outright; it is that it will succeed in a fragmented manner while superficially masking deeper inequities and pedagogical erosion.

Removing vendors won't fix streets



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NAZMUN NAHER

Some days ago, while passing through Panthapath on my way to work, I saw many people, including day labourers and rickshaw pullers, gathered with sombre expressions: the roadside food stalls they depended on for affordable meals had been removed. This highlighted for me how urban street vendor removal disrupts essential economic and social lifelines and made me wonder whether city management can move beyond short-term clearances towards a more sustainable approach.

Dhaka's city administration has stepped up efforts to remove street vendors to improve traffic flow, urban aesthetics, and commuter safety. From a commuter's perspective, this may feel like a necessary intervention as stalls often block sidewalks and streets, causing congestion and making movement difficult. However, informal markets are an integral part of the economic chain. Small producers handle production of goods, middlemen handle transport to the vendors, and vendors sell directly to low-income consumers. Removing stalls disrupts this chain, reduces income, and limits access to affordable

food and essentials. Policies aimed at improving urban order can therefore unintentionally harm thousands of livelihoods and prove to be largely ineffective.

We have seen it before: authorities clear the streets of vendors, protests erupt and, within days, streets are reoccupied. Even after designated markets like Bangabazar and the Dhanmondi hawkers' market were established, thousands of vendors have continued to operate across the streets of Dhaka and other urban areas. Removing such a significant number of vendors is a measure that carries substantial risks, including breaking existing supply chains, triggering protests, and possibly disrupting the livelihoods of some of the most vulnerable people in our society. In this case, what long-term, formalised solution can protect the interests of citizens, aid in traffic management, and simultaneously safeguard the livelihoods of the street vendors while ensuring that low-income consumers are not overlooked?

One approach is to test solutions in a single zone before scaling up. Authorities could designate a street

or cluster where vendors operate under regulated conditions, monitor the results, and refine policies based on lessons learned. Interim measures might include time-bound vending permissions or temporary zones, ensuring that income and access to food continue while longer-term plans are developed. Physical measures can also prevent unsafe or unplanned vending. Raising dividers along busy roads can discourage vendors from setting up in the middle of traffic lanes. Footpaths—often used by informal shops—can be made unavailable with the installation of trees, benches, and waste bins, thus discouraging vendors from occupying these spaces. On the road, careful placement of bus bays, traffic signalling, and speed regulation can prevent vendors from setting up in unsafe places. These well-planned measures will not only keep streets safe for commuters but also prevent the recurring cycle of vendors setting up shop in dangerous or obstructive locations.

A long-term strategy may begin with rehabilitating existing vendors, although this requires further resources and planning. The government could develop a database capturing vendors' skills, experiences, and locations to guide pilot projects. Migrants from rural areas could be offered alternative employment, vocational training, loans, or support for freelancing or overseas opportunities. Dedicated vending zones could help generate government revenue, provide consumers with convenient access to goods, and sustain livelihoods. Allowing vendors

to operate during off-peak hours—such as in the early morning for breakfast stalls—ensures commuters can move safely while consumers retain access to affordable food. With thoughtful urban planning, areas where informal markets can coexist with city traffic can be identified, supported by infrastructure such as shelters, waste management, and pedestrian pathways. Formalisation is also essential as licensing of vendors provides legal recognition, access to training, and support for hygiene, business management, and microfinance. In return, the government could collect revenue systematically, improving city finances while supporting small-scale entrepreneurship.

Dhaka's planners face a complex challenge: modernising infrastructure and managing traffic while keeping the informal economy alive. Current practices, which prioritise street clearance over inclusive planning, fail to serve commuters, residents, or vendors effectively. The solution must be holistic; balancing traffic management, pedestrian safety, urban aesthetics, and economic sustainability. Policymakers must seek solutions where all stakeholders see their interests reflected. The goal is not merely to remove vendors but to rethink urban management in a way that balances order and opportunity. When cities are planned to account for both mobility and economic activity, they give way to spaces where growth, social equity, and order can coexist. In a rapidly expanding metropolis like Dhaka, such an approach is essential.

Maritime skills development is key to expanding our blue economy



Ahamedul Karim Chowdhury, adjunct faculty at Bangladesh Maritime University, is a maritime, logistics, and supply chain policy analyst.

AHAMEDUL KARIM CHOWDHURY

Bangladesh's maritime sectors, particularly shipbuilding and ship recycling, are entering a phase where future competitiveness will depend less on labour availability and more on skill intensity, safety compliance, and technological capability. While the country continues to benefit from a large and cost-competitive workforce, persistent shortages of certified welders, marine technicians, supervisors, and quality-control personnel are constraining productivity and limiting the industry's ability to move up the value chain. At the same time, a significant proportion of workers in shipyards and recycling facilities still acquire skills informally, often in high-risk environments, resulting in avoidable accidents, inconsistent quality, and reduced operational efficiency.

This disconnect between labour supply and skill readiness is emerging as a structural bottleneck at a time when Bangladesh is seeking to diversify exports, strengthen industrial capacity, and position itself within the blue economy. As policy attention shifts towards employment generation, industrial upgrading, and sustainable growth, the need for a structured and industry-aligned maritime skills ecosystem has become more pronounced. Shipbuilding and ship recycling clearly illustrate this gap: both sectors have demonstrated scale and resilience, but their long-term competitiveness will increasingly depend on the quality of human capital rather than its quantity.

Over the past two decades, Bangladesh's shipbuilding industry has made notable progress, evolving from small coastal vessel construction to exporting oceangoing ships to international markets. Local shipyards have established a presence in segments such as small and medium-sized vessels, supported by competitive labour costs and growing technical capability. The sector employs a substantial workforce and has the potential to benefit from rising global demand for feeder vessels, inland waterway transport, and specialised ships. However, the absence of a structured pipeline of certified and technically trained workers continues to limit productivity improvements and technological upgrading.

The situation is more acute in the ship recycling sector. Bangladesh remains one of the world's leading ship recycling destinations, with yards in Sitakunda playing a critical role in supplying scrap steel to the



Infrastructure development cannot ensure competitiveness without a corresponding investment in human capital.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

domestic economy. Despite its economic importance, the sector faces persistent scrutiny regarding its lack of occupational safety and environmental standards. A significant number of workers enter the industry without formal training, increasing exposure to workplace risks and undermining compliance with emerging global standards.

These challenges are likely to intensify as international regulatory expectations evolve. The Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships is gradually gaining traction, and compliance is increasingly influencing the commercial decisions made by shipowners, financiers, and insurers. In parallel, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations are becoming central to global supply chains. In this context, countries

that fail to professionalise their workforce and align with safety and environmental standards risk losing competitiveness and market access.

Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated and institutional response. Establishing a dedicated shipbuilding and ship recycling academy under the state-run Bangladesh Maritime University can be a practical, implementable pathway. Rather

with international standards would not only improve domestic productivity but also enhance the global employability of Bangladeshi workers.

An integrated institutional approach would also enable a lifecycle perspective, linking ship design, construction, operation, and dismantling within a single knowledge framework. This would strengthen Bangladesh's positioning within

the same time, the development of certified maritime skills could open opportunities in the global labour market.

Several advanced shipbuilding nations, including South Korea and Japan, are facing labour shortages in technical and production roles due to demographic transitions. Bangladesh has the potential to position itself as a supplier of trained maritime professionals, similar to how the Philippines has successfully developed a global seafaring workforce. Structured training and internationally recognised certification could enable Bangladeshi workers to access higher-value employment opportunities abroad, contributing to remittance growth while strengthening bilateral industrial linkages.

Conversely, the cost of inaction is likely to be significant. Continued reliance on low-cost, low-skilled labour is unlikely to be sustainable in an increasingly technology-driven and compliance-oriented global maritime industry. Without systematic skills development, Bangladesh risks remaining trapped in a low-value segment of the industry, facing increasing competition from more technologically advanced and better-regulated competitors, while also exposing its workforce to preventable risks.

From an implementation perspective, the proposed academy does not require extensive new legislation or large-scale capital investment. Bangladesh Maritime University can provide academic oversight and accreditation, while relevant ministries and the National Skills Development Authority can ensure alignment with national qualifications frameworks. Industry stakeholders can play a direct role in curriculum design and training delivery, ensuring that programmes remain responsive to evolving market needs. This public-academic-industry partnership model would enhance both relevance and long-term sustainability.

Bangladesh has already made substantial investments in maritime infrastructure, including ports, inland waterways, and logistics systems. However, infrastructure development alone cannot ensure competitiveness without a corresponding investment in human capital. The effectiveness of these investments ultimately depends on the availability of skilled professionals capable of operating and managing increasingly complex systems.

At a time when the country is seeking to strengthen its industrial base and expand its participation in the blue economy, prioritising maritime skills development represents a strategic and timely intervention. Establishing a shipbuilding and ship recycling academy would provide a structured mechanism to bridge the gap between labour supply and industry requirements, improve safety and environmental performance, and enhance Bangladesh's position in the global maritime economy.

Climate change demands a new approach to protecting haor farming



Kashmir Reza is president of Poribesh o Haor Unnoyon Sangstha (POHUS). He can be reached at kashmirreza@gmail.com.

KASHMIR REZA

Every year, farmers in the haor wait anxiously for the harvest season. A flash of lightning in the sky or a cover of dark clouds can send waves of panic through them during March and April. Flash floods threaten crops just weeks before harvest. Despite large public investments for crop protection dams, uncertainty persists. At the same time, these dams are increasingly criticised for their negative impact on the haor ecosystem. This recurring vulnerability raises an important question: are crop protection dams really the most effective solution for safeguarding haor agriculture?

Elderly residents of the haor recall a different past when once there were no crop protection dams and farmers relied on local knowledge, seasonal adjustments, and small earthen barriers built by the community. After Bangladesh's independence, more structured embankments began to appear. With the establishment of a haor development board in 1974, public financing for embankment construction began. Large-scale construction expanded in the 1990s.

Then, the devastating flash floods of 2017 marked another turning point. Massive crop losses triggered protests across the haor region, and demands emerged that construction should be shifted away from contractors and handed over to local farmers. Following these protests, the Kabita Nitimala 2017 was revised and Project Implementation Committees (PICs), largely composed of local stakeholders, were assigned responsibility for embankment construction.

Haor agriculture depends heavily on a single crop, Boro rice, grown during the dry season. Nearly 30 percent of Bangladesh's

total Boro rice comes from haor areas, making crop protection a national priority. To protect this crop, submersible embankments are constructed every year.

In Sunamganj alone, Boro cultivation covers more than 223,500 hectares, while around 602 kilometres of embankments have been built this cycle. The Bangladesh Water Development Board allotted about Tk 148 crore for the construction. These projects are implemented through PICs involving local farmers and stakeholders. Yet, despite this investment, farmers continue to face crop losses and uncertainty.

The need for crop protection dams cannot be ignored. Haor areas remain highly vulnerable to flash floods originating from upstream hills and heavy rainfall. These floods often arrive just before harvest, destroying crops and pushing farmers into debt. The 2017 disaster still remains fresh in people's memory. For millions who depend on a single annual crop, embankments provide at least some sense of security.

However, these dams often fail to deliver reliable protection. Construction delays, poor-quality work, weak monitoring, and premature rainfall frequently undermine their effectiveness. In many cases, embankments remain incomplete even after construction deadlines have passed. Others develop cracks soon after construction. In recent years, heavy rainfall and hailstorms have damaged crops before harvesting could begin in several haor areas. These recurring failures suggest that the problem is not merely technical but also institutional, involving governance, planning, and accountability.

Given these realities, a broader, combined

approach is necessary as dams alone cannot protect haor agriculture.

Flash floods in the haor region are becoming more frequent due to climate change and geographical realities. Ensuring the smooth flow of floodwater from the northeastern region to the sea is crucial. Dredging rivers within the haor basin could help improve drainage capacity. In addition, downstream rivers up to Bhairab and the

before the floods arrive. In that case, reliance on crop protection dams would be reduced significantly. Developing these varieties is important, but ensuring seed availability afterwards and raising awareness about them among farmers is equally crucial.

Heavy rainfall in the Meghalaya hills remains a major trigger for flash floods in the haor region. Improving weather forecasting and early warning systems

increases vulnerability. Therefore, haor dwellers could put more emphasis on fish production. At the same time, fishermen's rights to the wetlands have to be ensured. Cultivating dry-season vegetables on elevated land, investing in fisheries, livestock, and floating agriculture could also help spread the risk. Mechanised and faster harvesting technologies could also help farmers harvest crops quickly before floods arrive.

PICs for dam construction should be formed based on members' eligibility and proximity, not political considerations. Farmers who depend directly on these embankments should have a stronger role in planning and monitoring.

Crop protection dams create some unintended consequences. Soil for embankment construction is often collected by cutting highland vegetation (locally known as *kanda*) within the haor, which can affect the local ecosystem. Meanwhile, suitable soil sources are becoming more and more scarce. Poorly designed embankments obstruct water's natural flow, leading to waterlogging in some areas and increased flood pressure in others. They may also disrupt fish migration routes, affecting biodiversity and fisheries.

Research-based, long-term planning should complement infrastructure development in the haor regions. Timely construction and independent quality monitoring of dams must be ensured. Early maturing rice varieties, crop diversification, improved forecasting, and restoration of natural drainage systems should be prioritised. Most importantly, the active involvement of local communities should be ensured through transparent governance mechanisms.

Crop protection dams are and will remain necessary. But they cannot be the only solution. Repeated failures and increasing negative impacts on haor ecology demand a broader, more integrated approach. Rethinking haor crop protection through ecological, technological, and nature-based strategies can help ensure sustainable livelihoods and long-term food security in Bangladesh's fragile wetland ecosystem.



PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

A farmer harvests half-ripe paddy in Hakaluki Haor of Moulvibazar on April 6, 2026, as heavy rains and upstream water submerged Boro on thousands of hectares.

Meghna basin may also require dredging to ensure proper water flow. Meanwhile, climate change has shifted the timing of floods. Earlier, floods used to arrive in late April. Now, they sometimes occur in late March. This demands early harvesting strategies. Currently, most haor rice varieties take 150 to 160 days to mature. If shorter duration varieties of around 120 days become widely available, farmers could harvest the crops

could help farmers make timely decisions. Restoring canals, wetlands, and natural drainage systems could also increase water-holding capacity and reduce sudden pressure on embankments. The government's canal excavation programme, if properly implemented, could play a beneficial role for haor areas.

Crop diversification is another important measure. Dependence on a single crop



22nd CA Convocation

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB)
Saturday, April 11, 2026



PRESIDENT
People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangabhaban, Dhaka
28 Chaitra 1432
11 April 2026

Message

I am delighted to learn that the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) is set to hold its 22nd Convocation on 11 April 2026. On this auspicious occasion, I extend my congratulations to the students on the successful completion of their CA qualification.

Since its establishment in 1973, ICAB has been working relentlessly to ensure transparency, accountability and good governance in the financial sector. The Institute has been playing an important role in producing competent Chartered Accountants through quality education and professional training.

The present government remains firmly committed to ensuring accountability, the proper use of public funds, and curbing corruption across the financial sector and public institutions. In this context, accounting professionals have a vital role to play in upholding corporate discipline and maintaining the highest ethical standards within the accounting system.

A convocation is a significant milestone that celebrates the dedication, perseverance, and achievements of both educational institutions and their students. I earnestly hope that the Chartered Accountants graduating today from ICAB will make meaningful contributions to the continued growth and stability of our national economy. I extend my best wishes for their continued success in future endeavors.

I wish the 22nd Convocation of ICAB a resounding success.

Md. Shahabuddin
Mohammed Shahabuddin



MINISTER
Ministry of Finance
Government of the People's
Republic of Bangladesh

Message

I am pleased to learn that the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) is holding its 22nd Convocation. I extend my heartfelt felicitations to all the newly qualified Chartered Accountants who will be awarded certificates on this important occasion.

Chartered Accountants are key contributors to economic stability and growth of a country. By maintaining high standards of financial reporting, auditing, and governance, they enhance transparency and build trust in financial systems. Their professional services help businesses operate efficiently, attract investment, and comply with regulatory requirements, thereby supporting the broader development of the national economy.

Since its inception, ICAB has been working for the development of the accounting and auditing professions in Bangladesh. I commend ICAB for its continued commitment to maintaining high professional standards, advancing education and training, and supporting the development of the accounting profession in Bangladesh. I hope ICAB will continue to play the role in ensuring integrity, transparency and accountability in the arena of our growing economy.

I wish the 22nd Convocation of ICAB every success and convey my best wishes to the qualifying Chartered Accountants for a bright and meaningful professional journey ahead.

Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, MP



MINISTER
Ministry of Commerce
Government of the People's
Republic of Bangladesh

Message

I am delighted to know that the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) is organizing its 22nd Convocation. On this important occasion, I extend my warm congratulations to all the newly qualified Chartered Accountants who are about to begin a new chapter in their professional journey.

A strong and transparent financial system is essential for the growth of trade, commerce and industry. Chartered Accountants play a significant role in ensuring financial accountability, improving business practices and strengthening corporate governance. Their professional expertise helps organizations maintain reliable financial reporting and comply with regulatory standards, which ultimately enhances confidence among investors, stakeholders and the members of the business community.

In today's dynamic global marketplace, the role of Chartered Accountants has become increasingly important. By supporting businesses with sound financial advice, risk management, strategic decisions and compliance with international standards, they contribute to building a competitive and sustainable commercial environment. Their services are instrumental in promoting investment, facilitating trade and strengthening the overall economic structure of the country.

I appreciate the continuous efforts of ICAB in producing highly skilled and ethical professionals who contribute meaningfully to the advancement of our economy.

I wish the 22nd Convocation of ICAB a grand success and the qualifying Chartered Accountants every success in their future endeavors.

Khandakar Abdul Muktedir
Khandakar Abdul Muktedir, MP



MINISTER
Ministry of Information
and Broadcasting
Government of the People's
Republic of Bangladesh

Message

I am delighted to know that the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) is organizing its 22nd Convocation. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the newly qualified Chartered Accountants.

Chartered Accountants play a vital role in strengthening transparency, accountability, and good governance-key elements for sustainable economic growth and national development. In today's information-driven world, where communication, data, and technology shape public perception and decision-making, the role of financial professionals in ensuring accuracy, credibility, and trust has become even more important.

As Bangladesh continues its journey towards becoming a knowledge-based and digitally empowered nation, the synergy between information, communication, and financial integrity is essential. Chartered Accountants, with their expertise and ethical commitment, contribute significantly to building confidence among stakeholders, supporting informed decision-making, and promoting responsible governance across sectors.

I encourage the newly qualified Chartered Accountants to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and transparency in their careers. Their knowledge and skills will not only contribute to organizational success but also to the broader goal of national progress and sustainable development.

I convey my best wishes to the qualified Chartered Accountants for a bright and rewarding professional career and wish the 22nd Convocation of ICAB every success.

Zahir Uddin Swapon
Zahir Uddin Swapon, MP



SECRETARY
Ministry of Commerce
Government of the People's
Republic of Bangladesh

Message

It gives me great pleasure to extend my warm greetings on the occasion of the 22nd Convocation of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB). I convey my sincere congratulations to all newly qualified Chartered Accountants.

Chartered Accountants play a vital role in the growth and development of business and commerce. Their expertise in financial management, compliance, and governance supports businesses in making informed decisions, ensuring transparency, and maintaining financial discipline.

As Bangladesh continues to expand its trade and industrial base, the role of Chartered Accountants becomes even more significant. They contribute to creating a business friendly environment by supporting regulatory compliance, improving corporate governance, and facilitating sustainable business practices. Their involvement helps enterprises-large and small-navigate challenges, manage risks, and seize new opportunities in both domestic and international markets.

I encourage the newly qualified Chartered Accountants to utilize their knowledge and skills in advancing business development, promoting ethical practices, and supporting the country's economic progress. Their professional integrity and commitment will play a key role in strengthening the foundations of a resilient and inclusive economy.

I wish the newly qualified Chartered Accountants every success in their future endeavors and look forward to their meaningful contributions to the economy and the nation.

Mahubur Rahman
Mahubur Rahman



PRESIDENT
The Institute of
Chartered Accountants
of Bangladesh (ICAB)

ADDRESS OF WELCOME

It is my great pleasure that the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) is going to hold its 22nd Convocation to award certificates to the Chartered Accountants who qualified in the Chartered Accountancy Examination between November-December 2022 and November-December 2025. My heartiest congratulations to all the newly qualified Chartered Accountants!

Since its establishment through the promulgation of The Bangladesh Chartered Accountants Order, 1973 (President's Order No. 2, 1973), ICAB has consistently upheld its mandate to serve the public interest and has strengthened the accountancy profession across national, regional, and global arenas. This Convocation represents another significant chapter in that continuing journey, reflecting our enduring commitment to excellence and professional integrity.

Earning the prestigious Chartered Accountant designation from ICAB, one of the leading professional bodies in South Asia, marks the beginning of a promising and rewarding career. This day will undoubtedly remain a lasting source of accomplishment and inspiration. While this qualification opens doors to diverse opportunities both at home and abroad, it also brings with it profound responsibilities.

Dear awardees, you are entrusted with the duty to uphold the highest standards of ethics, integrity, and professionalism. Your knowledge and expertise should not only advance your own career but also contribute to the broader development of our nation, economy and society as a whole.

Pursue your aspirations with determination, embrace opportunities with confidence, and never lose sight of your goals. I firmly believe that it is your commitment to professional values and ethical conduct that will define your long-term success and distinguish you in the years ahead.

Once again, congratulations to all certificate recipients. I wish you every success in your future endeavors and look forward to your meaningful contributions to the profession, the Institute, the country, and the future generation.

I also thank the chief guest, special guests and all other guests, the ICAB management team and officials for their efforts to make the convocation a remarkable and successful one.

N K A Mobin
N K A Mobin FCA



CHAIRMAN
Financial Reporting Council
Finance Division, Ministry of Finance
Government of the People's
Republic of Bangladesh

Message

It is a matter of great pleasure that the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) is organizing its 22nd Convocation. I extend my sincere congratulations to all the newly qualified Chartered Accountants on this important milestone in their professional journey and convey my best wishes to their families and the entire ICAB community.

As the Chairman of the Financial Reporting Council, the apex regulator of the financial reporting and auditing practices in Bangladesh, I firmly believe that high-quality financial reporting, sound auditing practices, and effective regulatory oversight are fundamental to ensuring transparency, accountability, and investor confidence in the economy. Chartered Accountants play a fundamental role as statutory auditors in safeguarding the integrity of financial reporting, enhancing transparency, ensuring accountability, and supporting informed decision-making by investors, regulators, and other stakeholders. As independent professionals, they are entrusted with the responsibility of providing assurance on the fairness and accuracy of financial statements.

In today's increasingly complex financial environment, the role of auditors has become more significant than ever. Upholding high standards of audit quality, professional skepticism, and ethical conduct is essential to maintaining confidence in the financial system. The Financial Reporting Council is committed to improving the quality of financial reporting, strengthening public trust, and supporting sustainable economic development in Bangladesh by promoting robust regulatory oversight and ensuring alignment of auditing practices with international standards.

I appreciate the continued efforts of ICAB in developing competent and ethical professionals who contribute to strengthening the audit profession in Bangladesh. I am confident that the newly qualified Chartered Accountants will uphold the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and independence in discharging their responsibilities. I encourage them to apply their knowledge responsibly in support of transparent reporting, sound governance, and compliance with applicable standards.

I wish the 22nd Convocation of ICAB every success and the qualified Chartered Accountants a distinguished and impactful professional career.

Dr. Md. Sajjad Hossain Bhuiyan
Dr. Md. Sajjad Hossain Bhuiyan



PROFESSOR
North South University
(Convocation Speaker)

Message

I take this opportunity to thank the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh for inviting me to address its 22nd Convocation. It's a true privilege and indeed my pleasure to congratulate newly qualified Chartered Accountants. I wish them a productive future.

Chartered Accountants are a stratum of "organic" intellectuals on the terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production and business exchange. The rise of the capitalist mode of production, together with civil society itself, can hardly be imagined without taking the Accounting profession into account.

Chartered Accountants cannot be defined as such by the job they do, but rather by the role they play within society; this function is always, consciously or unconsciously, that of the technical, economic and, more emphatically, political "hegemony" or "leadership" of a social group, either of the dominant group itself or of another tending towards a dominant position.

Every social group, not least the group known as the "bourgeoisie" in the modern world system, creates organically together with itself, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the cultural, social, and political fields.

In the modern world system, the capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside herself/himself not simply the industrial engineer, but rather all of them out there, the economist, the novelist or storyteller, the filmmaker, the painter or artist, the lawyer and not least the Chartered Accountant.

The entrepreneur herself/himself represents a higher level of social organization, already characterized by a certain managerial and technical (i.e., intellectual) capacity. This is why I have attempted to remind you of the words first put forward by Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), the world famous Italian, who also understood the function of Chartered Accountants in modern society as a stratum of "organic" intellectuals.

However, I must also admit, Chartered Accountants themselves may not agree with this Gramscian characterization. Many of them would like to take themselves for an autonomous and independent caste of the dominant group, and believe themselves to be a distinctive, even unique group in themselves, that is to say as a type of traditional intellectuals. This is because, if I follow Gramsci aright, every "essential" social group which emerges into history out of the preceding economic structure "has found (at least in all of history up to the present) categories of intellectuals already in existence and which, in all candor, believed to represent a historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms."

The history of colonialism and the apish behaviour of our colonized intellectuals in the late colonial era today provide a further testimony to the validity of Gramsci's analysis. These few lines I have scribbled is further proof of that truth. Colonialism continues unabashed!

Salimullah Khan, Ph.D.
Salimullah Khan, Ph.D.



PRESIDENT
International Federation
of Accountants (IFAC)

Message

On behalf of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), I congratulate the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) and all its newly qualified members on the occasion of the 22nd ICAB convocation.

This is an important milestone for your graduates. Today the Institute recognizes their achievements and welcomes them as professional members who will contribute to financial accountability, corporate governance, and sustainable economic growth in Bangladesh.

ICAB, as a member of IFAC since our founding in 1977, has always been an important part of the IFAC family. Its dedication to professional excellence and the public interest has been an essential ingredient in economic growth and stability. Moreover, through participation in IFAC, the Confederation of Asian and Pacific Accountants (CAPA), and the South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA), ICAB has earned a reputation as a leader in the global profession. We are grateful for your partnership and look forward to deepening our relationship over many years to come.

I encourage all new ICAB members to take this moment to celebrate your hard work and this significant achievement. I wish you good luck and much success in the promising careers ahead of you.

Jean Bouquet
Jean Bouquet



PRESIDENT
South Asian Federation of
Accountants (SAFA)

Message

I am delighted to extend my warmest greetings on the occasion of the 22nd Convocation of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB). My heartfelt congratulations to the newly qualified Chartered Accountants. You have overcome one of the world's most demanding professional challenges and now stand as the future of our profession.

Whether in audit and assurance or in industry and commerce, your role has evolved. You must move from record-keepers to value creators-becoming business value partners who translate data into strategy, manage risk, and strengthen resilience. As AI and automation reshape routine work, your professional judgment, ethical insight, and critical thinking will remain indispensable.

Today's stakeholders place a strong "trust premium" on our signature. They expect transparency, leadership in ESG and sustainability under IFRS S1 and S2, and ethical innovation in adopting technologies like AI and Blockchain.

The Chartered Accountant designation is a living legacy, upheld by integrity in every decision. Commit to lifelong learning and the highest ethical standards.

Congratulations once again. May your journey be defined by excellence, innovation, and unwavering integrity.

Mohammed Humayun Kabir
Mohammed Humayun Kabir FCA



PRESIDENT
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in
England and Wales (ICAEW)

Message

It is a great pleasure to extend my warmest congratulations to the newly qualified members of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh on the occasion of its 22nd Convocation. This important milestone reflects not only your individual dedication, perseverance, and achievement, but also the strength and integrity of the profession that ICAB continues to uphold. Events such as this play a vital role in celebrating excellence, reinforcing professional values, and inspiring the next generation of chartered accountants to contribute meaningfully to economic growth, transparency, and public trust.

ICAEW is proud of its longstanding and valued relationship with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh, built on shared commitments to high standards, ethical leadership, and global collaboration. As ICAB continues to play a pivotal role in strengthening financial reporting and governance in Bangladesh, we look forward to deepening our partnership in the years ahead. Together, we can work to support professional development, advance standards, and shape a resilient and forward-looking accountancy profession worldwide.

Derek Blair
Derek Blair



VICE PRESIDENT
(Education & Training)
The Institute of
Chartered Accountants
of Bangladesh (ICAB)

Message

Heartiest Congratulations to our Newly Qualified Chartered Accountants!

This milestone event celebrates the dedication, perseverance, and achievements of all newly qualified Chartered Accountants and marks the beginning of an exciting professional journey filled with opportunities, responsibilities, and growth.

The Chartered Accountancy curriculum is carefully structured to provide comprehensive knowledge, technical expertise, and practical skills in accounting, auditing, and financial management. ICAB continuously updates its curriculum to align with international standards, emerging trends, and the evolving needs of the profession. This enables Chartered Accountants to meet the demands of a dynamic and rapidly changing world.

The global recognition of ICAB's education and training is a testament to its quality, rigor, and relevance. For newly qualified Chartered Accountants, ICAB's qualification and certification provide you with a strong foundation, but professional growth is a lifelong pursuit. As you step into the professional world, remember that your learning does not end here.

My best wishes go to all newly qualified Chartered Accountants.

Md. Rokonzaman
Md. Rokonzaman FCA

Jamaat

FROM PAGE 3
government, they are annulling the referendum order. This double standard is a betrayal of the nation and a grave dishonour to the blood of martyrs," he also said.

Alleging that the BNP is moving towards fascism by ignoring the referendum's verdict, he added that if the prime minister, home minister, law minister, and other ministers and MPs cannot accept the verdict of 70 percent of voters in the referendum, they should declare in parliament that they did not vote "yes".

It would not be possible to stay in power by betraying the people and standing against them, he warned. "To remain in power, the BNP itself must resolve the ongoing political crisis," Porwar added.

Mohammad Selim Uddin, a member of Jamaat's central executive council and ameer of Dhaka North city unit, presided over the rally.

DSCC plans to turn waste

FROM PAGE 3
producing biogas, compost, biofuel, eco-bricks, and solid refuse-derived fuel.

On March 16, Salam visited the site and inaugurated a compost plant designed to process 100 tonnes of organic waste daily, yielding 20 tonnes of organic fertiliser.

He also announced plans to convert the landfill into an eco park and playground to reduce odour and pollution. Work is expected to begin after Eid-ul-Azha.

DSCC engineers are currently installing fire safety measures, including 40 hydrants across the 181-acre site, pipelines, reservoirs, and portable pumps. Soil covering of waste mounds is also underway to mitigate fire risks.

Dr Mohammad Sofiullah Siddique Bhuiya, DSCC's supervising engineer, said landfill gas extraction,

fire prevention, and soil covering are being carried out in tandem.

"Once completed, waste management will become far more effective. It will not only address Dhaka's mounting waste crisis but also bring positive changes to the city's environmental management by turning daily waste into usable resources," he added.

However, urban planner Adil Mohammed Khan expressed caution. "Given the current context of Bangladesh, the quality of waste here, particularly the high proportion of wet content, raises serious questions about whether our waste is even suitable for power generation. So far, there has been no research confirming that Bangladesh's waste is adequately prepared for waste-to-energy production."

He noted that a similar project by DNCC in Aminbazar failed to present

a credible feasibility study and has since remained stalled.

"Now, DSCC is also considering similar waste-to-energy initiatives. However, under the existing conditions, there is still no technically sound or evidence-based study that proves the feasibility of such projects in Bangladesh. Therefore, such initiatives should be avoided," he added.

"Our waste management master plan, which was developed when the two city corporations were unified, emphasised source segregation and exploring ways to reuse waste. The focus should be on assessing the feasibility of these aspects. As for waste-to-energy in Bangladesh, there has been no pilot project so far. The government should first conduct research-based initiatives; only after that should it move forward with such projects," he added.

Dhaka South

FROM PAGE 3
2030, with around 60,000 trees planted each year on average, he also said.

To this end, DSCC has taken the initiative to establish a modern nursery under its own management. Additionally, under an agreement with the Forest Department, a "Zero Soil" project will be implemented, which will make it possible to cover road medians and islands with greenery through grass and trees, he added.

Highlighting the importance of public awareness, Abdus Salam said, "If residents are aware, 50 percent of the city corporation's work becomes easier. We will complete the remaining 50 percent."

"Through collective efforts, it will be possible to implement the prime minister's vision of a 'Green City, Clean City,'" he added.

DU Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr ABM Obaidul Islam attended the event as a special guest.

Of smoke, soot, and suffering

FROM PAGE 3
oxygen levels and preventing fish from growing properly," he said.

Alamgir Hossain Shrabon, a member of Noihati Union Parishad, said the factory was shut down temporarily following a series of protests by locals.

"But later it resumed operations by illegally managing authorities," he alleged.

Shahjahan, a teacher from Amdabad village, said such factories should not be allowed to operate near schools, colleges and residential areas.

Masum Billah Shikari, a shareholder of the factory, said the carbon black produced there is exported to China. He added that installing chimney connections for emission control could increase fire risks.

Masum also claimed that similar factories operate across the country and that the emissions do

not harm the environment, as the open space reduces environmental impact.

Experts refuted the claim.

"Burning jute sticks in dozens of furnaces without emission control systems releases large amounts of particulate matter, black carbon, and several toxic substances into the air. These include carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO₂), particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and sometimes nitrogen oxides (NOx)," said Sadhon Chandra Swarnokar, an assistant professor of Environmental Science at Khulna University.

"Prolonged exposure to the particulate matter and fumes increases the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, particularly among children and the elderly. Deposited soot reduces

photosynthesis, degrades soil quality and harms aquatic ecosystems," he added.

Tarun Kumar Bala, upazila agriculture officer in Rupsha, said excessive smoke and fly ash disrupt pollination, harm beneficial insects, and adversely affect overall agricultural productivity, while also posing health risks to people.

Harunur Rashid, assistant director of the Department of Environment in Khulna, said the factory's environmental clearance was not renewed after 2014 due to non-compliance with conditions.

"We will conduct a field inspection to determine whether it is operating illegally and take necessary legal action," he added.

Sanjida Rikta, upazila nirbahi officer in Rupsha, said the administration will coordinate with the DoE to take action based on its findings.

People's Republic of Bangladesh Metropolitan Senior Special Judge Court, Dhaka.

Present: Mr. Md. Sabbir Faiz
(Metro Sessions Judge)
Metropolitan Senior Special Judge, Dhaka.

Permission Petition No.217/2026

Order No.- 01, Date: 30-03-2026

Investigation officer Mr. Amitab Sannasi, Sub-Inspector of Police, Financial Crime, CID, Bangladesh Police, Dhaka submitted a petition under Motijheel P.S case no.32, Dated-23.02.2022 under sections 4(2) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012 (amendment-2015) to freeze accounts of accused Kazi Mofizul Islam and 5 Bank accounts and also related to his interests under section 14(1) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012.

The petition is taken up for hearing,

Heard learned Additional Public Prosecutor and gone through the petition as well as the records. It is found that an enquiry is undergoing against the aforesaid alleged accused Kazi Mofizul Islam and 5 Bank accounts and his family members and also related to his interests under section 14(1) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012.

It appears from the record that the alleged offender has acquired huge amount of illegal wealth beyond his known source of income by adopting illegal means and if those assets are not attached and freed those assets will be laundered or transferred and those can not be possible to be forfeited after trial which will frustrate this case. Hence those assets need to be freed and attached.

Considering the facts and circumstances, I am convinced to allow the petition submitted by Investigation officer Mr. Amitab Sannasi, Sub-Inspector of Police, Financial Crime, CID, Bangladesh Police, Dhaka and accordingly the assets as mentioned in the petition are hereby freed and attached until further order as per section 14(1) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012.

It is hereby further ordered that the copy of this order be issued to the Director, Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Motijheel, Dhaka to the effect that while the freezing order is in effect regarding the said accounts, the account holders will not be allowed to withdraw any money. But they will be at liberty to deposit only.

Let this order be published in the Government Official Gazette along with widely circulated one daily Bengali and one daily English newspaper under section 14(3) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012 for information of the citizens at large.

Let this order along with the photy copy of the application be sent to Investigation officer Mr. Amitab Sannasi, Sub-Inspector of Police, Financial Crime, CID, Bangladesh Police, Dhaka and Publication department, Tejgaon, Dhaka; Director, Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Motijheel, Dhaka, and other concerned authorities for necessary action.

Inform all concerned Authorities at once.

Directed & Corrected by me.

Sd/-
Metro. Senior Spl Judge, Dhaka.
Memo Number: 4247(4)/26

Sd/-
(Md. Sabbir Faiz)
Metro. Senior Special Judge, Dhaka.
Date: 06/04/2026

GD-792

People's Republic of Bangladesh Metropolitan Senior Special Judge Court, Dhaka.

Present: Mr. Md. Sabbir Faiz
(Metro Sessions Judge)
Metropolitan Senior Special Judge, Dhaka.

Permission Petition No.225/2026

Order No.- 01, Date: 05-04-2026

Investigation officer Mr. Sumon Kumar Saha, BP no.8717521903, Additional Special Superintendent of Police, Cyber Investigation and Operation Cyber Police Center (CPC), CID, Dhaka submitted a petition under Source Memo-848, Dated: 02.04.2026, Memo No.CI/CPC/Orga.Crime(Ma.L)/02-2025/1114, Dated:29.06.2025 and CI/Orga.Crime(Ma.L committee(part-1)/136-2019/2185, Dated:24.02.2026 to freeze Accounts of accused namely Syed Abed Ali and others and 05 BO Share accounts information and also related to his interests under section 14(1) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012.

The petition is taken up for hearing,

Heard learned Public Prosecutor and gone through the petition as well as the records. It is found that an enquiry is undergoing against the aforesaid alleged accused Syed Abed Ali and others and 05 BO share accounts and also related to his interests under section 14(1) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012.

It appears from the record that the alleged offender has acquired huge amount of illegal wealth beyond their known source of income by adopting illegal means and freed those accounts will be laundered or transferred and those can not be possible to be forfeited after trial which will frustrate this case. Hence those accounts need to be freed.

Considering the facts and circumstances, I am convinced to allow the petition submitted by Investigation officer Mr. Sumon Kumar Saha, BP no.8717521903, Additional Special Superintendent of Police, Cyber Investigation and Operation Cyber Police Center (CPC), CID, Dhaka and accordingly the accounts as mentioned in the petition are hereby freed until further order as per section 14(1) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012.

It is hereby further ordered that the copy of this order be issued to the Chairman, Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission to the effect that while the freezing order is in effect regarding the said accounts, the account holders will not be allowed to withdraw any money. But they will be at liberty to deposit only.

Let this order be published in the Government Official Gazette along with widely circulated one daily Bengali and one daily English newspaper under section 14(3) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012 for information of the citizens at large.

Let this order along with the photocopy of the application be sent to Investigation officer Mr. Sumon Kumar Saha, BP no.8717521903, Additional Special Superintendent of Police, Cyber Investigation and Operation Cyber Police Center (CPC), CID, Dhaka and Publication department, Tejgaon, Dhaka; Chairman, Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission, and other concerned authorities for necessary action.

Inform all concerned Authorities at once.

Directed & Corrected by me.

Sd/-
Metro. Senior Spl Judge, Dhaka.
Memo Number: 4191(4)/26

Sd/-
(Md. Sabbir Faiz)
Metro. Senior Special Judge, Dhaka.
Date: 5/4/26

GD-791

Bangladeshi shot

FROM PAGE 12
It read that they reached near Chongket and Markan gardens when members of the Indian Khasi community, suspecting them to be "betel nut thieves," opened fire.

Several rounds were fired, leaving Saleh dead on the spot, the statement said, adding that his associates – Sumon Mia, 25, from Nazirgaon village, and Masum Ahmed, 20, from Karbalur Tuk – took the body to Bangladesh.

Quoting local sources, BGB said all three individuals had prior involvement in cross-border smuggling activities.

IMF

FROM PAGE 12
"Given the spillovers from the war, we expect near-term demand for IMF balance-of-payments support to rise by somewhere between \$20 billion and \$50 billion, with the lower bound prevailing if ceasefire holds," Georgieva said.

The IMF chief was kicking off the annual Spring Meetings co-hosted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington, which bring together top economic policymakers from around the world.

Speaking on Bloomberg TV on Thursday, World Bank President Ajay Banga said his institution could put up as much as \$25 billion "very quickly" in financing to developing countries affected by the war. He said as much as \$60 billion may be made available over the longer term, if countries need it.

The US-Israel war on Iran, launched on February 28, has engulfed the Middle East in violence, snarled supply chains and sent oil prices surging after Tehran virtually blocked the Strait of Hormuz.

Georgieva highlighted the "asymmetric" effects of the crisis, hitting low-income energy importers much harder than others.

"Spare a thought for the Pacific Island nations at the end of a long supply chain, wondering if fuel still reaches them in the wake of such a severe disruption," she said.

Bangladeshi ship

FROM PAGE 12
UAE on February 27, carrying steel coils from a Qatar port and remained stuck in the Gulf due to the war.

Speaking over the phone, Rashedul Alam, chief engineer of Banglar Joyjatra, told The Daily Star yesterday that the vessel reached around 60 nautical miles from the strait about 10:00pm (local time) on Thursday.

He added that they attempted twice to communicate with Iranian authorities via VHF radio but failed.

On the third attempt, communication was established, and permission for passage was requested, but the Iranian authorities denied clearance.

The vessel subsequently sailed towards the Minasakar anchorage in the UAE, where it anchored around 3:00am local time, Rashedul said.

He added that the vessel is now stationed at an anchorage roughly 20 nautical miles from the Strait of Hormuz.

4 assaulted

FROM PAGE 2
Another victim, Nirnoy H Islam, said they had gone to the Faculty of Fine Arts at Dhaka University to observe preparations for the Mongol Shobhajatra. "They were holding a rally there before we were attacked."

"I was trying to stop the attackers, but they started targeting the women and beat us arbitrarily."

Nirnoy also questioned how anyone could identify a person's sexual orientation based on their dress or appearance.

Earlier in the evening, Azadi Andolon reportedly held a rally in the Shabbagh area calling for "freeing Shabbagh from homosexual programmes".

Kazi Moazzema Tasnim, who was also assaulted in the incident, filed a general diary with Shabbagh Police Station around 11:00pm.

According to the complaint, "As our male friends were escorting the female friends to Shabbagh Police Station, mobile journalists tried to block our way. We initially attempted to move away and requested them to step aside."

"They still continued to gather around and began asking our female friends various embarrassing, indecent, and suggestive questions, along with making offensive remarks."

The GD further stated, "After arriving at the police station, we learned that the gathering had been called by an organisation named Azadi Andolon. The call for the gathering was made from a Facebook account named Mohammad Shahriar Alam, and he was assisted by Ali Hossain Tanmoy."

Contacted around 10:00pm, Shabbagh Police Station Officer-in-Charge Moniruzzaman said they were yet to gather full details about the incident. "We have asked the victims to seek medical treatment. We will look into the matter," he told this correspondent, adding that no case had been filed in connection with the incident as of the filing of this report around 1:00am.

Meanwhile, the injured were undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

'Sir, please buy a pack...'

FROM PAGE 12
homeless people who have taken refuge there.

His father died three years ago. His mother later remarried and left him behind, forcing the boy to grow up under the care of his elderly, ailing grandparents.

His grandfather, Nasir Uddin, once kept the family going by working as a barber, somehow managing to keep food on the table. But about 10 months ago, illness forced him to stop working.

His grandmother, Rabeya Khatun, tried to keep the family afloat by working as a day labourer. But illness eventually forced her to stop as well.

From that point on, the burden of supporting the family fell on Al Amin's small shoulders.

By day, he attends school. By evening, he wanders the city streets selling popcorn. He keeps going until around 9:00 or 10:00 at night, and when he finally returns home, exhausted, he sits with his school books and finishes his homework.

Al Amin says, "If I don't sell for

even a day, we can't buy food. My grandparents are ill, and I have to buy their medicines."

Each day, he sells around Tk 450-500 worth of popcorn, keeping around Tk 180-200 after expenses. It's a small income, but it somehow feeds three mouths, albeit barely.

Yet even under the burden of responsibilities far beyond his years, Al Amin has held on to the courage to dream.

"I will not give up my studies. No matter how hard life becomes, I will keep going. One day, I will stand on my own feet – that is my dream," he says with quiet determination.

But beneath that resolve, his sorrow is impossible to miss. "My father is gone, my mother is someplace else, and my grandparents are ill. Still, I have to keep smiling. Otherwise, no one will buy my popcorn."

His grandmother, Rabeya Khatun, speaks with a mix of helplessness and pride. "At his age, he should be playing and studying. Instead, he has become our only support."

"I fry the popcorn, and his

grandfather packs it. In the evening, Al Amin goes out to sell it. Then, after returning home at night, he sits down to study," she adds.

His grandfather, Nasir Uddin, struggles to hold back his emotions while speaking about the boy.

"He is not just our grandson – he is our walking stick, our only support."

"I won't give up my studies. No matter how hard life becomes, I'll keep going. One day, I'll stand on my own feet – that is my dream."

The way he remains devoted to his studies leaves me in awe."

Ferdous Joy, a local resident from the Town Hall area, says, "Many know the boy, but very few know the tragic story behind his smile. We buy popcorn from him because of his smile, but how many of us ever pause to ask why a child has to wander the streets at night?"

Early rains fuel fear of severe dengue outbreak

FROM PAGE 12
Experts say these figures reflect persistent shortcomings in preparedness and response. Outdated strategies, weak planning, and the absence of a comprehensive policy have contributed to the steady rise in dengue infections.

They noted that Bangladesh lacks a comprehensive system to identify and track dengue patients throughout the year. As a result, many infections remain uncounted, undermining mosquito control efforts.

While logging and chemical spraying are the most visible measures for controlling mosquitoes, they often fail to destroy hidden breeding sites in both cities and villages, the experts noted.

They warned that efforts to control Aedes will remain ineffective without a science-based and coordinated programme supported by nationwide monitoring.

Emphasising a home-to-home awareness campaign, Bashar said that under such a programme, workers of city corporations and relevant authorities would visit households to assess their surroundings and educate residents about preventive measures.

"Citizens should be trained through this home-to-home approach. Each house could have a sticker or pictures on the front door, pointing out where Aedes mosquitoes breed."

He also suggested expanding similar initiatives outside Dhaka.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?
Experts have been calling for the formation of an integrated vector management unit since the massive dengue outbreak in 2019, but their suggestions have yet to move beyond paper.

Following the outbreak, when Bangladesh recorded more than 100,000 cases for the first time, the LGRD ministry prepared a proposal for establishing a vector control cell,

said Bashar.

According to the proposal, the cell would serve as the central authority for mosquito control. It would conduct research on insecticides, monitor mosquito density and diversity, study seasonal trends, develop prediction models, and introduce early warning systems.

However, the ministry did not move forward with the proposal, which now remains shelved, said sources.

DENGUE STATISTICS		
YEAR	TOTAL CASES	TOTAL DEATHS
2025	102,861	413
2024	1,01,214	575
2023	3,21,179	1,705
2022	62,282	281
2021	28,479	105
2020	1408	7
2019	1,01,354	179

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman, an associate professor at the National University, said the identification of mosquito breeding sites is the first step towards long-term control.

"Once the breeding sites are identified, Bti (Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis) should be applied there... When water accumulates in containers or stagnant water, mosquitoes will hatch. Bti can destroy the larvae."

Bti is a naturally occurring soil bacterium used as a biological pesticide to control mosquitoes and black flies without harming people,

pets, beneficial insects, or wildlife.

Given the current temperatures, rains could allow mosquitoes to mature within a week.

The authorities should assess mosquito density, identify hotspots, and establish a dedicated mosquito control cell responsible for logistics, equipment, insecticides, and field operations, Saifur said.

He pointed out that dengue cases in Bangladesh once remained between 2,000 and 5,000 annually but have surpassed 100,000 in recent years.

Mentioning climate change as a contributing factor, he said, "Winter has become shorter. Earlier, winter helped reduce mosquito populations significantly, but now its impact is much less."

"Because of Bangladesh's high population density, dengue cases could easily jump from one lakh to 10 lakh."

GOVT MEASURES
Abul Khair Mohammad Hafizullah Khan, joint secretary (Planning Branch 2) of the Local Government Division, said the government took up a Tk 1,181 crore project titled "Improvement of Urban Public Health Preventive Services Project" in 2023, with vector management as one of its main components.

However, the World Bank funded project was stalled due to the incorrect use of economic codes in the Development Project Proposal (DPP). The project is scheduled to run till June 2028.

"Unless the DPP is corrected, no spending or physical work of the project can begin," Hafizullah said, adding that funds have already been allocated and a revised draft of the DPP has been sent to the LGRD ministry for approval.

Preparatory work is underway so that the project, which includes upgrading the Mosquito Control Department, can move ahead quickly

Nahid Hossain Khondkar, director of Zoom Bangladesh School, said every student there comes from an underprivileged background.

"We teach from grade one to four and currently have 97 students. There are several children like Al Amin who come to school during the day and work at night. We try to support them with books, notebooks, and pens on our own initiative so as to encourage them to come to school at least," he said.

Al Amin's story is not just about one child. It mirrors the lives of thousands of children forced to fight poverty every day.

And yet, through all the hardship, a faint smile never leaves Al Amin's face. He knows that his smile is his means of survival, and his dream is what gives him the strength to endure.

Those wishing to assist Al Amin may reach out to Nahid Hossain Khondkar, director of Zoom Bangladesh School, at 01729813133.

once it is approved, he added.

Brig Gen Imru-al-Quais, chief health officer of DNCC, said the city corporation's technical committee, headed by its administrator, will sit this week to discuss the overall situation and ways to strengthen measures to control Aedes mosquitoes.

The committee is responsible for preparing action plans, providing guidelines, assessing the effectiveness of insecticides, and deciding on the introduction of new ones.

He said 90 supervisors have already received training on identification of Aedes breeding sources and larvae.

DNCC carried out a four-day drive in 536 schools at the end of last month, focusing on logging and the removal of stagnant water from containers and flower pots.

Quais said DNCC, in collaboration with BRAC, will launch a three-month programme soon to reduce Aedes breeding sources in 25 high-risk wards. "Local residents will also be engaged in it."

Besides, teams of data collectors will soon start visiting hospitals to collect addresses of dengue patients and carry out targeted interventions in the affected areas.

DSCC Chief Health Officer Jahane Ferdous-Binte Rahman said they conducted a month-long programme from February 29 to eliminate hotspots of adult mosquitoes and larvae.

She said workers and supervisors will be given training over the next two weeks, with a focus on identification and destruction of mosquito breeding grounds.

DSCC will distribute leaflets from door to door as part of efforts to raise public awareness, said said, adding, "Since mosquito proliferation is closely linked to waste management, we will work in coordination with the waste department of the city corporation."

report and that discussions had been held on enforced disappearance and the NHRC. He assured certain bills would be reintroduced after further scrutiny.

Shafiqur said failing to ratify all ordinances amounted to a breach of consensus.

After speeches by the home minister and chief whip, the Speaker said the remaining bills would be placed in the next session.

Shafiqur then alleged the opposition was being "blacked out". The Speaker replied that the opposition had the right to walk out.

Shafiqur said, "You promised justice for all. But today we are not receiving justice from you."

After further explanation by the law minister, Shafiqur said, "Inshallah, we will meet again here. But for today, we are walking out with sorrow."

Lawmakers from Jamaat-e-Islami, the National Citizen Party, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, and Khelafat Majlish left the chamber at around 7:37pm.

Afterwards, the house passed the Smoking and Tobacco Products (Control) (Amendment) Bill.

Opposition Chief Whip Nahid Islam took the floor twice, saying the ordinance was among the 98 agreed to be passed unchanged and that the opposition had honoured the consensus. "But in this case, we saw daylight trickery and outright deception," he alleged.

Before the walkout, Shafiqur said both the parliamentary special committee and advisory committee had agreed on ratifying all 133 ordinances. "But we are not seeing many bills... We have vital concerns about ordinances on enforced disappearance, the Police Commission, and the Anti-Corruption Commission. We want clarity on the fate of the remaining ordinances."

Asaduzzaman said the government had not deviated from the committee's

ADB flags

FROM PAGE 1
also in complexity, driven by years of infrastructure-led growth financed through borrowing.

This expansion has been underpinned by persistent fiscal deficits, meaning the government has consistently spent more than it earns, forcing it to rely on loans.

The government, however, has so far continued to meet its repayment obligations, or in other words, avoided a public debt default.

These findings echo recent assessments by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, both of which warned that Bangladesh's debt is shifting from a position of comfort toward a potential risk.

According to IMF data, total public debt stood at \$188.79 billion, or 41 percent of GDP, in fiscal year 2024-25, up from 39 percent a year earlier. This includes \$101.24 billion borrowed domestically and \$87.55 billion from external sources.

Servicing that debt, repaying both the principal and the interest, will cost the country over \$30 billion this fiscal year, placing increasing pressure on public finances.

The ADB highlights a shift in how Bangladesh borrows. More than 55 percent of its total debt now comes from short-term domestic borrowing, which must be repaid or refinanced quickly. This raises liquidity risks, or difficulty in meeting near-term obligations, and rollover risks, or the need to take new loans to repay old ones.

At the same time, Bangladesh is increasingly moving away from concessional low-interest loans typically offered by development partners toward costlier borrowing. This exposes the country to higher interest payments and greater vulnerability to global financial shocks.

Interest payments alone are consuming a growing share of government spending: 16.3 percent in FY2025, projected to ease slightly to 15.4 percent in FY2026, leaving less room for critical investments in areas such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

The report also warns of rising exposure to short-term external debt, making foreign exchange reserves crucial for stability.

However, these reserve buffers have weakened sharply. They fell from over 75 percent of total external debt in 2016 to just 21.5 percent in 2023.

While overall external debt remains relatively stable at around 22 percent of gross national income, this drop in reserve adequacy reduces Bangladesh's ability to absorb global shocks and increases the risk of sudden funding shortages.

Together, rising debt, higher servicing costs, and shrinking reserves point to an urgent need to strengthen debt management, the ADB said.

Despite recent policy efforts, the report identifies significant institutional weaknesses.

The Public Debt Management Act, it says, lacks clarity on why borrowing should occur, does not set limits on how much the government can borrow, and does not require parliamentary approval. This weakens its role as a fiscal anchor, a rule meant to keep government finances disciplined.

The law also does not establish an independent debt management office or ensure strong coordination among government agencies.

Transparency remains limited as well. There is no legal requirement to publish a Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy or detailed annual debt reports.

RECOMMENDATIONS
To address these risks, the ADB calls for sweeping reforms.

It recommends revising the Public Debt Management Act to introduce explicit borrowing limits and establish an autonomous debt management office responsible for risk analysis, strategy, and transparent reporting.

A unified Debt Management Information System would help track liabilities and improve transparency, while stronger audit and oversight mechanisms are needed, especially for large infrastructure projects, where cost overruns and hidden liabilities from state-owned enterprises can accumulate.

The lender also urges regular publication of detailed debt reports annually and quarterly, covering domestic and foreign debt, government guarantees, unpaid obligations, and exposure from state-owned enterprises.

Closer coordination between fiscal authorities, who manage spending and revenue, and debt managers is essential to ensure borrowing decisions align with debt sustainability objectives.

The report stresses that better public investment management, from project selection to execution, is critical to ensure borrowed funds generate strong economic returns.

It also highlights the need to monitor and disclose contingent liabilities, or potential future obligations, such as debts of state-owned enterprises.

GROWTH OUTLOOK DIMS
The ADB has further cut Bangladesh's economic growth forecast to 4 percent for fiscal year 2025-26, down from its earlier projection of 4.7 percent, citing rising fuel prices and disruptions in global supply chains linked to the US-Israel war on Iran.

This marks the third downward revision. The ADB had projected 5 percent growth for this fiscal year in September and 5.1 percent in April last year, before lowering it to 4.7 percent in December.

Growth is expected to recover modestly to 4.7 percent in FY2026-27.

"Bangladesh is facing a difficult economic environment, shaped by global uncertainties, domestic structural constraints, and pressures on the external and financial sectors," said Hoe Yun Jeong, the ADB's country director in Bangladesh.



Abahani's Diabate sinks Mohammedan

Souleymane Diabate had scored many crucial goals during his storied Mohammedan career against Abahani. He had singlehandedly beaten Abahani in the 2022-23 Federation Cup final. Now, having switched allegiance, the Malian forward is haunting his old club, scoring a superb goal as the Dhanmondi giants came back from a goal down to win 2-1 in their Bangladesh Football League fixture at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday. The win -- Abahani's sixth in 12 matches -- helped the six-time champions to 22 points and close the gap on league leaders Bashundhara Kings to just two points, although the leaders have a game in hand. Mohammedan, the defending champions, slipped to seventh position with 11 points. (Inset) Mohammedan fans, though, gratefully remembered Diabate's contribution to the club with a banner hung on the gallery.

PHOTO: BFF/FACEBOOK

ASIAN GAMES QUALIFIERS

Bangladesh edge Chinese Taipei to finish fifth

SPORTS REPORTER

Last edition's runners-up, Bangladesh hockey team, eventually finished fifth in Men's Asian Games Qualifiers after registering a 3-2 win over Chinese Taipei in the fifth-place deciding match in Bangkok on Friday.

Bangladesh, who on Thursday survived a scare to qualify for the upcoming Asian Games with a nerve-wracking 3-2 win over Hong Kong in a shootout, broke the deadlock in the seventh minute, with Ashraf Islam converting the penalty corner, before Wei Cheng-Ze brought back Taipei into the match by levelling the margin from open play in the 11th minute.

It was again Ashraf who restored the lead two minutes into the second quarter, also by converting a penalty corner.

Chinese Taipei once again showed character to level the margin just one minute from the interval, as Lo Hai-Kai struck from open play.

After resumption, Bangladesh pressed hard to restore lead, and newcomer Mehrab Hasan Samin struck the winner in the 38th minute from open play to deny Chinese Taipei, a side Bangladesh beat with a narrow 4-3 margin in their tournament opener.

NZ forced into late change for Bangladesh white-ball tour

ICC

New Zealand have been forced into a squad shuffle, with left-arm quick Ben Lister replacing the injured Kristian Clarke for their white-ball tour of Bangladesh beginning on April 17.

Lister, who has not played for the Black Caps in over two years, takes over from Clarke, who has been forced to withdraw due to injury.

Clarke suffered a cut to the webbing on his right hand while attempting a catch for New Zealand A in their tour match against Sri Lanka A earlier in the week.

Lister, also on the Sri Lanka tour, will travel to Bangladesh on Sunday ahead of the ODI series which begins next Friday, with the New Zealand-based team members departing for Bangladesh on Monday morning.

The first two games of the ODI series will take place in Mirpur, with the final match to be played in Chattogram.

The action then switches to the T20I series, with the first two matches taking place in Chattogram on April 27 and 29. The final game of the series will be played in Dhaka on May 2.

Loose ends in club crisis still at play?

ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI

While it appeared that the club crisis was at an end after Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) held a meeting with councillors from the revolting clubs on Thursday, even setting a tentative date for the start of the Dhaka Premier League (DPL), it now seems like there are a few loose ends that need to be tied up.

Two out of the 12 DPL clubs -- Legends of Rupganj and Brothers Union -- did not attend Thursday's meeting, where the first week of May was floated as a probable starting date.

However, now Rupganj's councillor Lutfar Rahman Badal appears to be against haphazardly playing the league on a short notice while Brothers Union officials are yet to clarify the club's stance.

"I am abroad right now. I saw everything but there is a need for preparation regarding everything. It's not like you can just say today that let's play and then you start playing tomorrow all of a sudden. The state the country, the financial issue, after considering everything, I will take my decision," Badal told The Daily Star on Friday.

"Why is the league taking place suddenly? There is a window for everything in cricket. This year the [DPL] window was in February and it has passed. My understanding is that they are holding it

in a 'crisis-management basis'. They can do that, of course, but we will be taking our decision," he said, adding that he knew that as per the DPL bylaws, non-participation would lead to relegation.

Badal also criticised the culture of rushing to start a league and spoke about where the last two boards headed by former players Faruque Ahmed and Aminul Islam Bulbul fell short.



"Cricket board is like a parliament, you need to have policy-making capacity to run it. If those in charge have never been involved in policy-making, how will the cricket board create policies?... We don't have that culture and that's why you see that the BPL is being played within a month's notice and the DPL in two days' notice," he said.

A Brothers Union official said that their representative will "let the board know of

the club's decision", when asked if they were in favour of playing the league.

CCDM officials, however, claimed that they have no information regarding any club's unwillingness to play.

Mohammedan representative Ziaur Rahman Topu said the clubs were not haphazardly starting the league, saying, "We are not hurrying. There is 20-22 days before start of league."

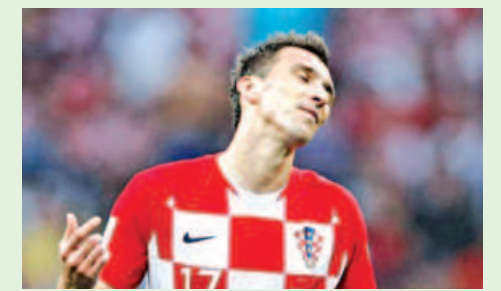
A.R. Mallick, representative of Dhanmondi Sports Club, said he was not aware of any disagreements, adding, "We usually always play in March and there were talks of starting on April 22 or 25. But since the New Zealand T20Is end on May 2, we decided to hold the league after that."

Rupganj councillor Badal had boycotted last year's Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) election at the last moment and yesterday, he told this newspaper that election irregularities led him to boycott.

However, organisers of other clubs who had also boycotted the polls suggested Badal stepped away at the insistence of the then sports adviser Asif Mahmud.

Sources also claim that Rupganj had signed contracts with players and officials for this season but have revoked those contracts.

While the expectation was that after the ouster of the Bulbul-led board, the club crisis would end, it now appears there are other issues at to resolve before holding the DPL.



Mandzukic's unwanted piece of history

The 22 World Cup finals played to date have seen 80 goals scored by 61 different players. Among them, Croatia's Mario Mandzukic holds a unique, bittersweet record from the 2018 final against France. Not only did he score for his country, but he also inadvertently turned the ball into his own net, becoming the only player ever to score an own goal in a World Cup final that Croatia lost 4-2.

** Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'A star is born: When 18-year-old Messi dazzled.'

Arsenal return to PL title push

AGENCIES

The Premier League resumes this weekend after a break for international games with Arsenal's push for a first title in more than two decades buoyed by a timely win in Europe.

The leaders return to league action in control of their destiny after steadying themselves with a morale-boosting 1-0 victory over Sporting in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final on Tuesday.

That followed a stuttering fortnight in domestic competitions, when Mikel Arteta's side suffered their first back-to-back defeats of the season.

They were beaten by rivals Manchester City in the League Cup final before their FA Cup run ended at the quarter-final stage against Championship side Southampton.

The wobble revived familiar questions about how Arsenal cope when pressure tightens, but Tuesday's win offered a reminder of their resilience.

"We stick together as a group, we have so much more to come this

season," said Kai Havertz, who scored Arsenal's lone goal against Sporting. "Seven weeks to go, we can win big titles, and we're going to go for that."

Arsenal have a nine-point lead over chasers Manchester City atop the table, though City have a game in hand.

Arteta's men host Bournemouth on Saturday knowing they cannot afford further slips with the finish line coming into view. Arsenal have seven fixtures left in the league season.

After months of looking short of their usual authority, Pep Guardiola's side have roared into form, outplaying Arsenal to lift the League Cup and then thrashing reigning Premier League champions Liverpool 4-0 in the FA Cup quarterfinals.

City travel to sixth-placed Chelsea on Sunday with confidence high and the sense that they are finally clicking into gear at the business end of the campaign.

Pep Guardiola's men still have a game in hand on Arsenal and the two face off next weekend in a potentially decisive clash in the title race.

Under-21 coach to take temporary charge of Italy

AFP, Rome

Italy's under-21 coach Silvio Baldini will take charge of the senior side for two friendlies in June, the FIGC national football federation said on Friday.

Gennaro Gattuso resigned from the job last week after Italy missed out on the World Cup for the third time in succession, following a penalty shootout defeat to Bosnia in a qualification playoff.

They will play away to Luxembourg on June 3 before taking on Greece in Heraklion four days later.

Baldini, who has been in the under-21s role since last July, is known for his unorthodox training methods.

Last October, the former Palermo, Parma, and Empoli boss made the under-21s train with eye patches on to help improve their concentration.

Italy will not name a new full-time coach until after the FIGC presidential elections in June.

Gattuso was in his role for less than a year.

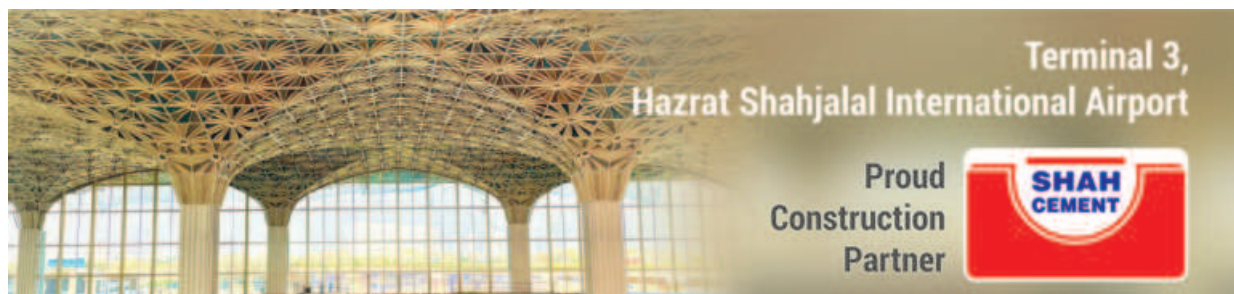
The new coach will be Italy's fourth since June 2023.

Napoli coach Antonio Conte, who previously was at the Italy helm from 2014-16, is the FIGC's preferred candidate, according to the Italian press.



Aston Villa have one foot in the Europa League semifinals after Thursday's hard-fought 3-1 win at Bologna, which could have had a very different complexion had it not been for the clinical Ollie Watkins. Ezri Konsa's header on the stroke of half-time and a brace from Watkins, who is playing for a place in England's World Cup squad, kept Villa on course for a first major trophy since winning the League Cup 30 years ago.

PHOTO: REUTERS



'Sir, please buy a pack...'

At just 9, Al Amin supports his grandparents by selling popcorn after school

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

A smile on his face. Tenderness in his eyes. A quiet plea in his voice: "Sir, please buy a pack of popcorn..."

As dusk settles over Rangpur city, and crowds gather at busy points like July Chatter, Town Hall and Shapla Chatter, this 9-year-old boy weaves through the passersby, clutching packets of popcorn in his small hands.

During the day, Al Amin is a fourth grade student at Zoom Bangladesh School, a small private initiative in Rangpur's Muslimpara area.

After school, however, he becomes the only earning member of his family.

He lives with his grandparents at the abandoned railway staff quarters near Rangpur station. The dilapidated building shelters destitute and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



COLOURS OF BAISHAKH ... As Pahela Baishakh approaches, shoppers were seen browsing a vibrant array of traditional handicrafts and festive items at a roadside fair in the Dhaka University's Doel Chatter area yesterday. Local artisans and vendors have set up extensive displays of heritage products.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

MIDDLE EAST WAR IMF to lower global growth forecast

AGENCIES

The International Monetary Fund will lower global growth forecasts due to the Middle East war, its chief said yesterday, warning of the conflict's "scarring effects" despite a fragile ceasefire.

"Even in a best case, there will be no neat and clean return to the status quo ante," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva said.

Georgieva said that - even in the fund's "most hopeful scenario" - spiralling energy costs, infrastructure damage, supply disruptions and a loss of market confidence meant growth would be less than expected.

The IMF also anticipates having to provide up to \$50 billion in immediate financial assistance to countries affected by the war, with food insecurity set to affect at least 45 million people.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Israeli strike kills expat in Beirut

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi expatriate worker was killed in an Israeli strike in Beirut on Wednesday, the Bangladesh Embassy in the Lebanese capital said yesterday.

The deceased, Dipali Begum, 34, was the daughter of Sheikh Mofazzal and Rozina Khatun, of Purbo Shalepur village in Faridpur's Charbhadrasan upazila. She had been working as a housekeeper in Lebanon.

In a statement, the embassy said Dipali was sustained injuries in an Israeli missile strike that hit her employer's house, where she was staying, in Beirut's Hamra area. She later died at a hospital, according to her family.

According to preliminary information, several members of her employer's family were also killed in the attack.

Local police sources said the body has been kept in the morgue of Rafik Hariri University Hospital.

The embassy expressed sorrow over the death of the remittance earner and conveyed deep sympathy to her bereaved family.

Dipali had gone to Lebanon two years ago in search of a better livelihood, her younger sister Lajiu Begum told The Daily Star. "We last spoke to her on the morning of April 8," she said. About a month ago, Dipali moved from Chur to Beirut after the conflict escalated. "She told us the situation in Chur had worsened because of the fighting, so she relocated to Beirut with her employer's family."

Charbhadrasan Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shuraiya Mamtaz said steps have been taken to bring back the body. "We will provide all necessary support to the victim's family... The process has already been initiated through diplomatic channels."

With Dipali's death, seven Bangladeshis have been killed so far in the US-Israel war on Iran.



Dipali Begum

Bangladeshi ship denied passage thru Hormuz

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Bangladesh Shipping Corporation's vessel -- Banglar Joyjatra -- has failed to cross the Strait of Hormuz due to the Iranian authorities' refusal to grant transit permission.

After being stranded in the Persian Gulf for nearly 40 days due to the US-Israel war on Iran, the ship left the outer anchorage of the Saudi port of Dammam on Wednesday morning following the ceasefire.

However, it was denied permission when it contacted the Iranian authorities upon reaching near the strait on Thursday night, said BSC Managing Director Commodore Mahmudul Malek.

He said the ship would now wait in a safer location.

Malek added that the government would attempt to secure safe passage through diplomatic channels and expressed hope that transit clearance could be obtained by tomorrow or the following day.

The vessel has 31 Bangladeshi crew members on board. It travelled to the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Early rains fuel fear of severe dengue outbreak

Experts suggest urgent action to eradicate Aedes breeding grounds

HELEMUL ALAM

Bangladesh is likely to face a large-scale dengue outbreak this year unless authorities act swiftly to identify mosquito hotspots, eliminate breeding grounds ahead of the monsoon, and intensify

situation could worsen even before the rainy season begins, making it harder for the government to contain infections.

"When it rains, water accumulates in containers scattered across different places, creating ideal breeding grounds

prone to rainwater accumulation, he said.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, Bangladesh recorded more than one lakh dengue cases annually over the past three years, overwhelming hospitals and



Cuban leader defies US calls to step down

AGENCIES

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said Thursday that he would not resign under US pressure and called for open dialogue in his first television interview with an American broadcaster.

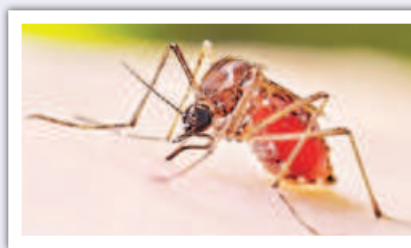
"We have a free sovereign state, a free state. We have self-determination and independence, and we are not subjected to the designs of the United States," Diaz-Canel told NBC News, according to their translation of his remarks.

"The US government that has implemented that hostile policy against Cuba has no moral to demand anything from Cuba," the 65-year-old leader added.

"The concept of revolutionaries giving up and stepping down - it's not part of our vocabulary."

ISSUES

- Poor waste management allowing water to accumulate in containers
- Lack of comprehensive, year-round dengue surveillance and patient tracking
- Over-reliance on fogging, failing to eliminate hidden breeding sites



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify, eliminate breeding hotspots through nationwide drives
- Strengthen waste management to prevent stagnant water accumulation
- Establish dedicated vector control cell under LGRD ministry

public awareness campaigns, experts have warned.

Early spells of rain in Dhaka and several other districts have heightened concerns over the breeding of Aedes mosquitoes, the vector of dengue and chikungunya, they say.

If breeding hotspots are not eradicated immediately, the

for Aedes. We need to strengthen waste management to ensure that water does not collect in these containers," said entomologist Kabirul Bashar, a professor at Jahangirnagar University.

The current period is vital for preventive action, particularly through better management of solid waste and containers in areas

pushing healthcare workers to their limits.

Last year, the country reported 413 deaths and 102,861 dengue cases. In 2024, the number of fatalities was 575 with 101,214 cases, while 2023 marked the deadliest year on record, with 1,705 deaths and 321,197 cases.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

Bangladeshi shot dead by Indian Khasis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead by members of the Indian Khasi community in a border area of Sylhet's Companiganj upazila, said BGB.

The incident took place on Thursday night, approximately one kilometre inside the Indian territory.

The victim, Saleh Ahmed Joydhar, 30, was a resident of Karbalartuk village of the upazila.

The information was confirmed yesterday in a press release sent by Lt Col Nazmul Haque, commanding officer of the 48 BGB Battalion in Sylhet.

According to the statement, victim Saleh Ahmed, along with his two associates, crossed the border into India around 8:30pm on Thursday with the intention of bringing in a consignment of drugs.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Perlite powder collected from LNG gas-carrying ships lies exposed at a coastal shipbreaking yard in Sitakunda's Kattali area. An extremely fine dust, it spreads with the wind and settles into surrounding water bodies. Environmentalists warn that, left uncovered without proper soil management, it poses serious health risks to local residents. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Astronauts gird for re-entry, splashdown

AFP, Houston

The Artemis II astronauts conducted a historic lunar flyby, gathered invaluable data and took in unprecedented Moon views, but one of the most crucial moments of their 10-day mission is still to come: splashdown.

Earlier this week, Americans Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch along with Canadian Jeremy Hansen voyaged further from Earth than any human before, in a mission considered a key stepping stone towards eventual crewed lunar landings, and more.

They are scheduled to splash down in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of San Diego at 5:07 pm local time (0007 GMT today), after which Nasa and the military will help them get out of the capsule and fly them to a recovery ship.

Their journey has been rich in milestones and already resulted in stunning photographs that have captivated the imaginations of people on Earth.

But until the astronauts are home safe, it's too early to talk about success, Nasa's Associate Administrator Amit Kshatriya told a briefing Thursday.

"When we can start celebrating is when we have a crew safely in the medbay of the ship," the high-ranking official said. "That's really when we can allow the emotions to take over, and, you know, start talking about success."

"We need to have the crew home before we do that." The stakes are particularly high given concerns that arose during Artemis I, a 2022 uncrewed test flight to the Moon and back that saw the Orion heat shield erode in unexpected ways.



Star

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WEEKEND READ

DHAKA SATURDAY APRIL 11, 2026

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The Daily Star

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PHOTO: STAR

BAISHAKHI MELA

a festival of heritage and joy



joy. A barber, mirror nailed to a tree trunk, shaved heads with a khur under the breezy shade. A fruit vendor, mixing chaat, sparred with a village elder in witty sholoks – lyrical Bangla couplets, part rhyme, part proverb, brimming with rural wisdom. Crowds gathered, laughing, clapping. The whole scene throbbled with raw energy, full of joy. That's the beauty of melas: they feed your soul.

The Artists Who Shaped It

"Historically, Baishakhi Mela is a centuries-old Bengali tradition, rooted in Mughal-era tax collection and marking the new financial year on Pahela Baishakh, celebrated on April 14. Over time, it evolved into a cultural and social festival transcending religion and class, symbolising peace, prosperity, and pride. It is a living emblem of Bengali identity, blending folk art, music, food, and communal joy," notes Md Rahat Uddin, chief designer at BSCIC.

Legendary artist Potua Quamrul Hassan (also spelled Kamrul Hasan) was among those who shaped the modern Baishakhi Mela

14th to 20th April, organised by BSCIC. It will spotlight the artistry of local craftspeople alongside the rich traditions of the indigenous communities. There will be 150 stalls, with 20 reserved stalls free of charge for enlisted indigenous artisans. The rest will be open to competition, offering a dazzling variety of crafts carefully selected by BSCIC authorities. From handwoven textiles to pottery, embroidery to terracotta, every stall will tell a story of heritage and skill," says Shefali Khatun, general manager, Marketing Department, BSCIC.

Beyond crafts, the mela will feature a food zone, baby rides, and even a blood donation stall, ensuring that the fair is not only a place of joy but also of community care. Despite challenges – shortened hours due to government regulations, global uncertainties, and local politics – the Baishakhi Mela remains a beacon of celebration. Each evening, the fair will close at 6:00pm, but the hours before will be filled with colour, music, and life.

"Highlights this year include shukher

and heritage must remain alive with joy and passion, so that every fair – Baishakhi, folk art, Rath, Eid, or Puja – becomes a festival for all. In these gatherings, Bangalees come together, and the handmade treasures of our artisans reach the younger generation, teaching them the essence of our traditions."

Remember meeting a nakshi katha artisan in Noakhali who told me how every stitch carried a memory of her grandmother's hands. For her, selling at the mela was not just business – it was storytelling. Another craftsman from Rajshahi, showing his shukher hari, explained how each pot he painted was a prayer for prosperity. These voices remind us that behind every stall is a human story, a lineage of skill passed down through generations.

"These creations are to be admired, cherished, and preserved. Just as foreign films frame their heritage in every shot, our cinema, drama, and theatre must carry the living backdrop of our artistry. In the end, the creations of our artisans shall endure, our folk art shall endure, and

Fairs are not just entertainment; they are engines of cultural survival. If fairs are organised in Dhaka and across the country at district headquarters, or internationally through government initiatives, the arts will survive – and with them, economic activity will flourish.

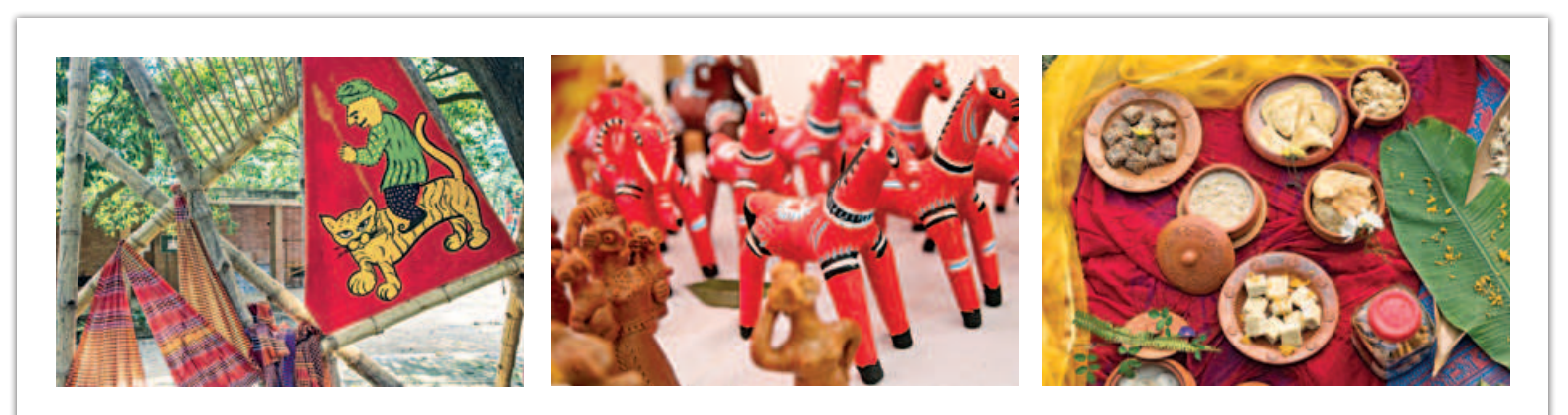
RAFFAT BINTE RASHID

My earliest memory of Baishakhi Mela takes me back to the late 1970s. I was riding a rickshaw with my father to Bangla Academy, clutching green glass bangles and little terracotta toys. The air was thick with the sweetness of pink candy floss, white sugary treats, lollipops, caramels, nut brittles, toffees, and soft roshgollas. Summer fruits like jamrul, kacha aam, and tetul sprinkled with chili salt were sold in newspaper packets.

It was magical. That was when my fascination with melas began. I was dazzled by the colours, the festivity all around. From then on, Baishakhi Mela has been close to my heart. Even now, whenever I spot a village mela or roadside fair, I cannot resist stopping by and wandering around, soaking up the vibrant atmosphere and letting it all carry me away.

One of my favourite memories was stumbling upon a mela in Tangail after a shoot. It wasn't a big city fair, just a simple village gathering. The day was hot, everything slow, and under the bright green tamarind canopy and the blazing red shimul tree in bloom, children swinging on the aerial banyan roots, the fair pulsed with life – like a Gabriel García Márquez scene.

Homemakers sold vegetables, chickens, eggs, sweets, and pickles; men displayed crafts. I grabbed hot jalebis made with sesame and molasses, tried new twists on old snacks. The squeaky nagar dola spun in pink, yellow, blue, and orange gondolas, children shrieking with



through Bangla Academy and BSCIC. Quamrul Hassan also created the national emblems, including the Government monogram, the Bangladesh Bank logo, the Biman Bangladesh Airlines logo (the iconic Balaka), and the final design of the national flag.

His vision, along with the contributions of Imdad Hossain and Qayyum Chowdhury, gave the mela its modern form while keeping its folk roots alive. Their artistry reminds us that fairs are not just gatherings – they are canvases where national identity is painted in colour, craft, and song.

"Since 1960, the BSCIC Design Centre has stood at the heart of traditional crafts. I've seen how its training in pottery, weaving, leather, metal, bamboo, jute, and more has empowered thousands to meet market demand and expand globally. It isn't just about skills – it's about giving artisans the confidence to carry heritage forward. Over the decades, the Centre has distributed tens of thousands of innovative designs, showcasing works by masters. To me, these achievements prove that craft is not only culture – it is nation-building," Rahat adds.

Baishakhi Mela 2026

"This year's Baishakhi Mela will be held from



hari from Rajshahi, katha stitch embroidery from Narsingdi, nakshi katha from Noakhali, pottery from Cumilla, weaving from Tangail, and shataranji mats from Naranganj. Together, they form a tapestry of culture that is uniquely ours," she adds.

Voices of the Artisans

Baishakhi Mela is more than a fair – it is a festival of resilience, creativity, and joy. It is a place where artisans thrive, traditions live on, and visitors leave with their hearts full.

As artisan, Subodh Kumar Pal, a master of tepa putul, reflects: "Bangladesh's culture

Bangladesh's thousand-year-old tradition and culture shall shine forever," Subodh urges.

His words echo a larger truth: fairs are not just entertainment; they are engines of cultural survival. If fairs are organised in Dhaka and across the country at district headquarters, or internationally through government initiatives, the arts will survive – and with them, economic activity will flourish.

A Living Heritage

Baishakhi Mela 2026 is thus not only a celebration of the Bangla New Year but also a reaffirmation of identity. It is a reminder that heritage is not static – it lives, breathes, and evolves with each generation. From the laughter of children on the nagar dola to the wisdom of elders trading sholoks, from the artistry of nakshi katha to the taste of tetul with chili salt, the mela embodies the soul of Bengal.

This April, Dhaka will once again prepare for this grand festival. The stalls will rise, the music will play, and the crowds will gather. And in every corner, from the terracotta toys to the embroidered quilts, from the government logos designed decades ago to the new crafts of today, the Baishakhi Mela will remind us: heritage is joy, and joy is our heritage.

Gender, agency and the quality of growth Lessons from the Bangladesh paradox

If the people of Bangladesh are to become co-creators of the country's future rather than cheap labour to boost the profits of a few, the country needs to prioritise a gender-equitable knowledge economy that is built on the care and capabilities of its population.

NAILA KABEER

A few years ago, I became interested in the claims in the economic literature that gender equality promotes economic growth. They were mainly based on findings that focused on gender equality in education and employment, which appeared robust across countries and over time. However, they were largely based on macro-level data. They speculated but did not offer any empirical explanation for their finding. One of the few exceptions I found was a study by Stephan Klasen. Let me summarise my analysis of his findings and then discuss its relevance to the Bangladesh paradox.

Klasen suggested two causal pathways through which gender equality might translate into economic growth. The first, which I described as the 'market-mediated' pathway, was based on the idea that talent was randomly distributed between men and women in a population so that by equalising their access to productive resources and opportunities, a country would be making the most of its human capital. The second was what I called the 'family-mediated' pathway. It argued that, given women's greater responsibility for the care of their families in much of the world, access to resources and opportunities that increased their bargaining power might help to shift the allocation of household resources towards what mattered to them, the health and education of their children, thereby increasing the productivity of the next generation of workers. This was an intergenerational effect that materialised over time as children grew up and joined the labour force.

Klasen found that macro level data supported a positive association between gender equality in employment and economic growth, but with some caveats. First, the effect was statistically significant for formal, rather than overall, employment. Of course, there are well-known problems with capturing women's informal work activities, which might explain the weaker effect. Second, causality could run in the opposite direction. Higher growth rates might generate more



Daughters, through paid work, were able to exercise a greater say in their own futures, as well as using their incomes to support struggling fathers, becoming the 'sons' their parents never had.

PHOTO: STAR

macro and micro levels for the family-mediated pathway. Women's education, as well as their employment, increased their bargaining power within the household and was associated with higher levels of investment in family wellbeing, including the health and education of children.

None of these studies is cited in my recently published book, 'Renegotiating patriarchy: gender, agency and the Bangladesh paradox' (LSE Press, London; UPL, Dhaka) because the book did not set out to make claims about gender equality and economic growth. Instead, it was concerned with why Bangladesh made such remarkable progress on social indicators despite the very low levels of growth and overpopulation that marked its early years – a phenomenon widely referred to as the Bangladesh paradox. But as I look back on what the book had to say and look forward to the uncertainty of the future, I can see that it provides both an interesting case study of how the causal pathways suggested in the gender and growth literature played out on the ground, as well as important lessons to carry forward.

The book draws on a wide variety of quantitative and qualitative studies to provide detailed evidence on how improvements in women's access to

contributing to the quality of this growth in the short run, ensuring that it went some way towards improving human wellbeing, while adding to its pace in the longer run.

The book also explores what it was about the wider policy environment that allowed women to gain this greater agency. Family planning programmes were given prominence in the early years of independence because high rates of population growth were seen as the country's number one problem. But these programmes recognised that women had a special stake in their success: as bearers of children, they paid with their health and their lives when they had no control over how many children they had. Accordingly, they were designed to circumvent prevailing restrictions on women's mobility outside the home by offering them a range of contraceptives at their doorstep. This period also saw successful collaborations between the government and NGOs to target mothers within their homes and communities to promote measures that would bring down high rates of infant and child mortality.

The significance of education was recognised by successive governments. Attention to female education emerged as a response to international findings that female secondary education was associated with delayed age of marriage and reduced fertility levels. The Secondary School Stipend for girls was first piloted in 1982 and, in the light of its success, adopted at the national level in 1994, just after the launch of the Food for Education programme in 1993.

The importance of explicitly targeting programmes to girls in a society with a long tradition of favouring boys' education is evident from evaluations of the two programmes. The evaluation of the non-targeted Food for Education programme found that its impact was mainly on the enrolment of boys in primary schools, with negligible impact on girls' education. The exception to this finding was in female-headed households, perhaps because mothers were in a position to ensure that daughters were educated along with sons. The female secondary stipend programme, on the other hand, was associated with increasing the gross enrolment rates for girls to the extent that these rates had overtaken those of boys by 2005, although gender disparities in completion rates persisted.

As far as women's employment opportunities were concerned, we saw the gradual expansion of work opportunities – from the casualised, poorly paid waged employment that only the very poorest women were willing to take up to a broader set of opportunities that allowed educated women from better-off households to enter acceptable forms of wage employment (in the public sector, in garment factories and in community-based service provision in health, education and microfinance) as well as

microfinance funded self-employment within or near the home.

The book was thus able to draw on a much richer body of evidence on the impacts of female employment and education in Bangladesh than was available in the macro-studies discussed earlier. It provided detailed quantitative evidence on the transformative impact of female education: delayed age of marriage, lower rates of fertility, weakening of son preference, better feeding practices, improved child survival, the education of daughters along with sons, greater voice in household decision-making and greater likelihood of formal employment.

This evidence did make one important point, that the impact of education will reflect the kind of education on offer. Evaluations from Bangladesh suggested that madrasa education, whatever else its advantages may be, did not promote egalitarian attitudes when it came to women and girls. Students from madrasa schools, both male and female, were more likely than students from government secondary schools to express unfavourable attitudes towards women's intelligence and political abilities, to prioritise higher education for boys, to believe in the primacy of the male breadwinner and to want larger numbers of children. Education, in other words, provides knowledge and skills, but it also shapes beliefs and attitudes, particularly among the young.

Compared to education, there was far greater variation in the kinds of employment that women could access, so the findings on impacts were also more mixed. Nevertheless, the available evidence suggests a continuum of impacts of women's employment on their voice and agency, stronger for women in income-generating employment than for the economically inactive and stronger for women in formal employment than in informal. The qualitative evidence suggested that women were motivated to seek paid work because they believed it would give them a great say in household affairs and greater priority to the goals they valued. Mothers invested in daughters as well as sons because they wanted their daughters to have better life chances than they had. Wives used their education and income to stand up to abusive husbands and oppressive in-laws. Daughters, through paid work, were able to exercise a greater say in their own futures, as well as using their incomes to support struggling fathers, becoming the 'sons' their parents never had.

I should add that while my book provides ground-level insights into the causal pathways between gender equality and the pace of growth put forward in the wider literature, its findings put greater emphasis on the impacts of equality on the quality of growth than is evident in the wider literature.

Bangladesh is now emerging from two years of turmoil: democracy has

been restored, but there has been some erosion of past gains, and the future holds new challenges, with climate change looming particularly large. We would do well to bear in mind two key lessons from the Bangladesh paradox that may help us navigate this uncertain future: the importance of gender equality and the importance of investment in human resources. If the people of Bangladesh are to become co-creators of the country's future rather than cheap labour to boost the profits of a few, the country needs to prioritise a gender-equitable knowledge economy that is built on the care and capabilities of its population.

Investment in broad-based social services (care of children and the elderly, health and education) and carefully designed social protection strategies would provide the foundations of such an economy. It promises a range of practical and strategic dividends. For one, the care sector is less carbon-intensive than other sectors that the country currently relies on. Second, investment in this sector would transform the unpaid private responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work that falls disproportionately on women's shoulders into a collective public responsibility, borne by society and accessible to all. This would allow women to participate in crafting the future of the country along with men. And third, it would generate jobs for women, given their traditional association with this work, but with pay and improved conditions, it has the potential to also draw in more men.

If investments in health represent investments in the physical capabilities of a population, investments in education relate to a more evolving notion of capabilities. These are the capabilities that, at the individual level, allow people to cope, adapt and flourish in an era of unpredictable change and that, at the societal level, make for productive workers, good parents and responsible citizens. But for this potential to be realised, the vision that shapes educational provision will be critical.

It will have to be ambitious, with attention to quality starting from the primary level and the acquisition of basic learning skills and continuing into higher education and lifelong learning. It will have to be interdisciplinary to allow the wisdom of different disciplines to be pooled. Climate scientists need to understand the social impacts of the solutions they propose; social scientists need to understand the impact of human behaviour on the environment. It will have to go beyond material needs to address people's need for art and culture, for connection with the natural world around them and for spiritual wellbeing. And it will have to be inclusive, nourishing the abilities and talents of all members of a society, regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity and other forms of inequality.

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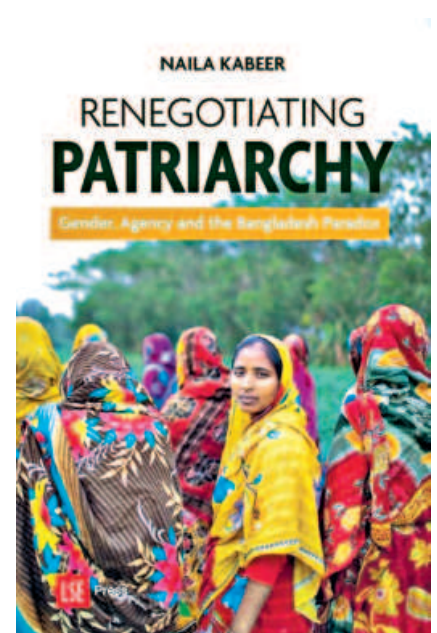


VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

employment for women. I pointed to a third caveat. Micro-level evidence showed that women earned less than men across sectors and at different levels of development, a product of the constraints on their productivity imposed by their unpaid domestic work responsibilities. There was little reason to expect that increasing women's employment relative to men would support a market-mediated pathway to growth. The main circumstances under which this might happen were the ability to pay women lower wages than men, added to employers' profits, as so often in global value chains.

Klasen controlled for possible reverse causality in his estimation of the relationship between gender equality in education and economic growth. Here, he found that the impact on economic growth was positive and significant across countries and education levels. He also provided evidence that the impact operated mainly through the family-mediated pathway. Improvements in women's education in absolute terms as well as relative to that of men were strongly associated with declines in fertility rates and child mortality and with improvements in life expectancy, a measure of the overall health of the population.

Since these are important elements of human wellbeing, these findings suggested that improvements in women's human capital and capabilities were important for the quality of growth and the wellbeing of populations, as well as for longer-term growth. And as I pointed out, there was a wide body of evidence at both



education and employment in the post-independence years increased their agency within the household and how they used this agency to reduce their fertility rates and improve their children's survival, health, nutrition and education as well as, very importantly, to reduce long-standing gender disparities in these indicators. This meant that for the first time in the country's recorded history, daughters began to enjoy, if not full equality with sons, then at least a significant improvement in their life choices and life chances. While the decline in fertility rates is widely recognised as contributing to the rising rates of growth we began to see in the 1990s, these other changes can be seen as

MADRASAS IN BENGAL

A legacy of learning and the challenge of change

MOHAMMAD YUSUF SIDDIQ

Historically, Bengal has had a rich tradition of madrasas, as evidenced by numerous inscriptions across the region. They played a pivotal role in diffusing education and creating a class of 'ulama' (scholars) who spread learning throughout the region together with the sufis (spiritual mentors). Madrasas were necessary for creating a large pool of educated professionals to fill various social, administrative, and official positions and ranks in both government and private sectors. Consequently, they had a long-term effect on the social, economic, and cultural growth of the region.

These institutions played the same role that modern educational institutions, such as universities and colleges, play in our contemporary period. The educated elite from madrasas assumed various roles and responsibilities in society. Thus, qadis would act as teachers and imams, while 'ulama' would also be engaged in scientific investigation or in medical practice. Minhaj al-Din Siraj provides us with some information about the establishment of madrasas in Bengal by the early Muslim rulers. Inscriptions offer information on the locations, dates of construction, names



Remains of a madrasa located near the historic Badshahi Road, in the vicinity of Sonalti, Purbasthali, Purba Bardhaman.

PHOTOS: MOHAMMAD YUSUF SIDDIQ



Map illustrating the historical growth and geographical distribution of madrasa institutions across medieval Bengal.

COURTESY: MOHAMMAD YUSUF SIDDIQ

of the Maliki school of fiqh (jurisprudence) at the al-Madrasa al-Sultaniyyah al-Ghiyathiyah al-Bangaliyyah (named after its Bengali patron, al-Sultan Ghiyath al-Din A'zam Shah) in Makkah. Construction of this madrasa began in the month of Ramadan in 1411 and was finally completed in 1412. A number of scholars from the family of Shibi (who became famous through their educational and scholarly activities in Makkah during the fifteenth century) taught at this madrasa.

A few prominent international scholars attached to this madrasa, as mentioned by al-Fasi, were Qadi Jamal al-Din Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Qarshi (d. 1414), Shihab al-Din Abu 'l-Khayr Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Saghani (d. 1422), Qadi Muhy al-Din 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni al-Fasi (d. 1424), and Shaykh Abu 'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Mardini al-Haskafi (d. 1422). The syllabus of this madrasa covered the four famous schools of Islamic jurisprudence, which, in a way, indicates the liberal policy and religious tolerance that prevailed in Bengal.

Sultan Jalal al-Din (r. 1414-33), the heir-apparent from the house of Ganesha, also sent generous endowments to Makkah and Madinah to establish two madrasas there, which came to be known as al-Madrasa al-Bangaliyyah over time, and set a precedent for the globalisation of the name "Bangala" in those days. Bengali students often travelled for their religious training to famous centres of learning in Jaunpur and Delhi, and sometimes as far away as Khurasan, Central Asia, and Arabia. The Dar al-'Ulum in Deoband, Mazahir al-'Ulum in Saharanpur, Madrasa

Mulla Nizam al-Din of Aurangzeb's time), in which special emphasis was given to the Hanafi fiqh. At times, these institutions contributed significantly to promoting al-'ulum al-naqliyyah (namely, classical religious scholarship) as well as al-'ulum al-'aqliyyah (rational knowledge or sciences).

After the first war of independence in 1857, the vast majority of 'ulama' focused their attention on theological education only, which they considered an alternative to armed struggle against colonial rule or jihad. They regarded this effort to equip the younger generation with educational empowerment as a form of lesser jihad (a struggle to establish justice), albeit a passive one, as it neglected the modern sciences and focused solely on classical religious scholarship. Undoubtedly, the changing political environment led these 'ulama' to follow this passive path, as the participation of many of them in the jihad movement had made the colonial powers suspicious of their activities, and madrasa institutions came under special scrutiny.

Most of the pre-colonial madrasas during Muslim rule were supported by endowments until the East India Company passed orders in 1828 to acquire all awqaf (endowments) of madrasas, depriving these institutions completely of their main source of income. The final blow came during the time of Lord Harding, when he passed a law in 1844 forbidding graduates of Persian and Arabic (non-governmental Islamic) madrasas from being given employment in government. Even the official jobs of qadi (justice) with the government, previously exclusively

it became famous as Calcutta 'Alia madrasa, which is still in operation today (with a recent change in its name as 'Alia University). In this institution, secular subjects such as Bengali and English language and literature were added. Later, all government-sponsored madrasas which taught this new curriculum became known as 'aliya madrasas (literally: higher institutes). Though they were not popular initially with the mainstream rural Muslim population, as they received support from the British raj, slowly and gradually, 'aliya madrasas spread throughout Bengal. Since independence, 'aliya madrasas have spread further in the region; thousands of students graduate from 'aliya madrasas every year.

At the end, one has to accept the fact that the institution of the madrasa, which once contributed greatly to the growth of intellectual and scientific advancement in the old world for nearly a millennium or so, adopted a closed-door policy during the past few centuries, reducing its sphere of academic interest to the study of some outdated classical Islamic scholarship, which is completely irrelevant to the needs of the day.

One classical example of blind adherence to the outdated tradition (تقليد) is the peculiar use of the Arabic phrase (قوله من ادبنا ندمنا) which translates as 'Sultan is the shadow of Allah on the earth, and to disgrace him amounts to disgracing Allah'. It is used in Friday congregational sermons (khutba al-Jum'a) in many parts of South Asia (and the neighbouring regions). This Arabic metaphor, which never existed during the time of the Prophet (PBUH) or in the successive period, must have been skillfully and ingeniously introduced by the ruling class to legitimise their rule inherited through kingship. Its strange continuance, even after the lapse of sultanate rule long ago, followed by a long interval of European colonial rule for nearly two centuries, is an eye-opening example of the irrational blind adherence of some traditional societies to certain fixed ritualistic texts, even if they do not make any sense. The use of this Arabic phrase, though not prescribed by the Prophet (PBUH), indicates the illogical attachment of conservatives as well as dogmatists to a set of fixed sacred texts without scrutinising their relevance to time and space. Obviously, this is one of the detrimental factors to the future growth and development of any society, spiritually, religiously, and intellectually.

The time has come to adapt the madrasa curriculum to the challenges of our modern time, embracing the modern advances in logic (منطق), philosophy (فلسفة), scholarly reasoning (تدقيق), and other fields, as was tradition in the past. Even the theological study in the madrasa can be developed in line with the scientific study of religion followed in many advanced institutions in the developed world. It is high time that madrasa education should gradually move out from the narrow dogmatic approach based on certain stereotyped sectarian views of religion and move towards a more creative and innovative approach in the field of Islamic Studies.

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In the end, one has to accept that the institution of the madrasa, which once contributed greatly to intellectual and scientific advancement in the old world for nearly a millennium, adopted a closed-door policy in the past few centuries.

of patrons, and so on, and help us identify centres of learning. In some cases, this information sheds light on links between various institutions, the transmission of ideas, student-teacher connections, and intellectual genealogies.

There were many famous madrasas, madrasa-baris, and dars-baris (i.e., schools and colleges; dars means lesson, bari in Bengali means house or building) throughout the country, where learning flourished. Congregational mosques often served as centres of higher learning, and masjids frequently functioned as maktabas, as they still do in many cases.

An early inscription from Naohata, from the reign of Balka Khan (626-628 AH, 1229-1231 AD), records such a mosque that also served as an advanced academy in the region, where scholarly issues were debated and discussed. Epigraphic texts suggest that the capital, Gaur, evolved as one of the earliest intellectual and cultural centres in the north. It had numerous mosques (more than fifty mosque inscriptions have been discovered in the area), madrasas, and khanqahs as early as the thirteenth century. Another early capital of the north, Hadrat Pandua (similarly rich in inscriptions), also became a prosperous cultural centre, where many mosques and madrasas flourished.

In eastern Bengal, Sonargaon (near Dhaka) became a famous educational centre after the arrival of the renowned Hanbali scholar Shaykh Sharaf al-Din Abu Tawwama in the middle of the fourteenth century. Abu Tawwama's fame attracted many students to the Sonargaon madrasa from different corners of the Islamic world. Shaykh Sharaf al-Din Yahya Maneri, who became a well-known sufi figure of the Subcontinent, also attended this madrasa. Tandah, Rajmahal, Murshidabad, and Jahangirnagar

(today's Dhaka) became noted centres of learning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In northern Bengal, Ghoraghat, in the present district of Dinajpur, attracted many 'ulama' and students during the Mughal period. In southwest Bengal, Tribeni and Chhoto Pandua (in the present district of Hooghly) had a number of madrasas (the earliest one, Dar al-Khayrat, was established around 713AH/1313AD according to an inscription) during the Sultanate period. The town of Mangalkot (in the present district of Burdwan), not far from Tribeni, also earned fame as a great seat of learning, a reputation it maintained until the nineteenth century. In the southeast corner of Bengal, Chittagong evolved as the main educational centre, where the Madrasa Muhsiniyyah in the nineteenth century and the Hathazari madrasa in the twentieth century played a crucial role in spreading Islamic education.

The cultural interactions of the Bengal Sultanate often surpassed the political and geographical boundaries of South Asia. Many 'ulama' and sufis travelled from Central Asia, Asia Minor, and the Arab world and settled in Bengal. Some of the madrasas and khanqahs that they established attracted students from various parts of the old world. Sultan A'zam Shah had two madrasas built during 1410-11, one near the Umm al-Hani gate (situated on al-Rukn al-Yamani or Yamani corner) of the Grand Mosque at Makkah, and the other near Bab al-Salam (the Gate of Peace) of the Prophet's mosque at Madinah. He also endowed a large property to support these two institutions, which were considered among the best seminaries in the region during that period.

Renowned scholars, such as Shaykh Taqi al-Din al-Fasi (1374-1428), a pioneer in the field of epigraphy, taught



Excavated remains of the Darasbari Madrasa, located between two tanks in the Ghoshpur mauza of Gaur-Lakhnawti, southwest of the Kotwali Darwaza.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

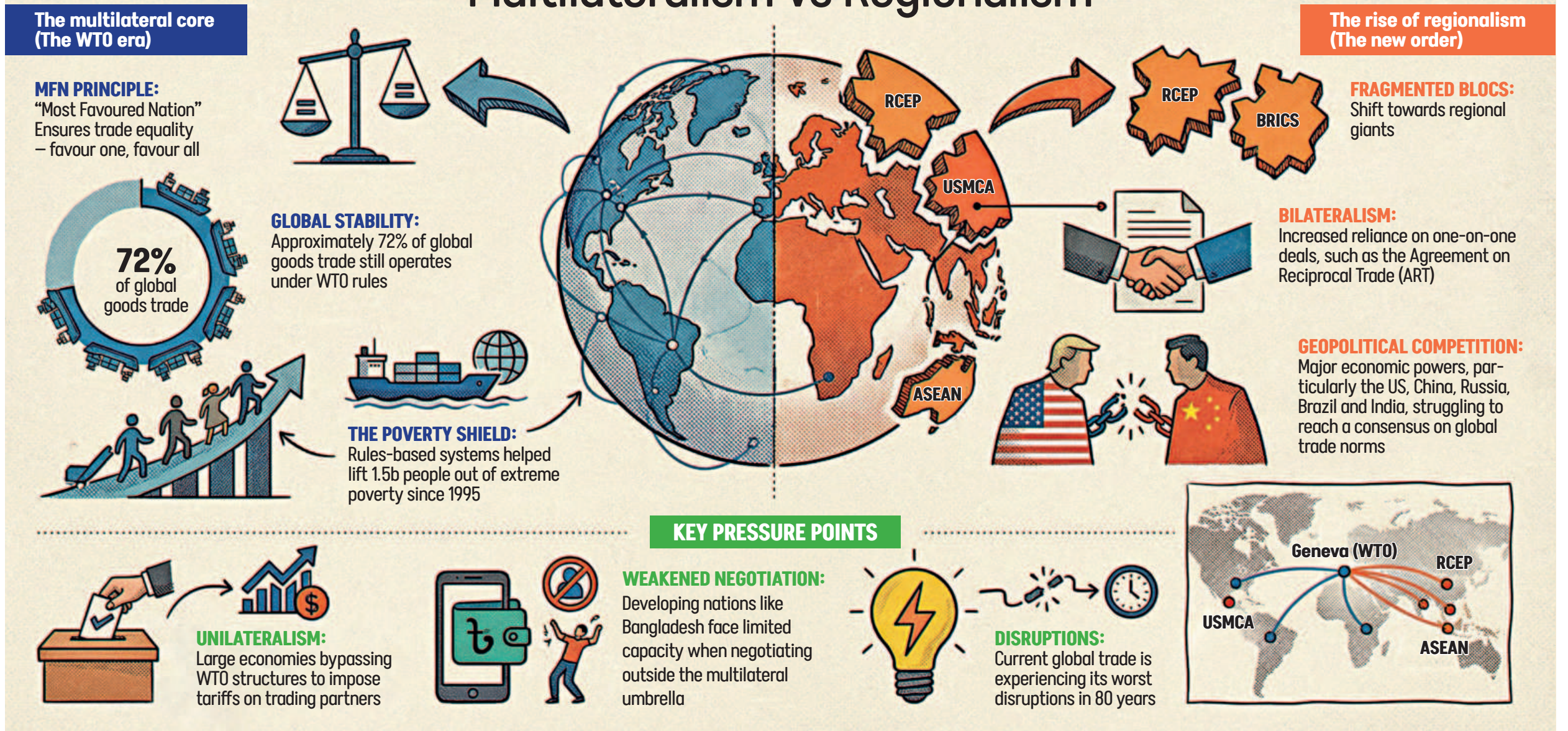
Rahmaniya in Delhi, and Nadwat al-'Ulama' in Lucknow attracted many students from Bengal during the colonial period and afterwards. Many of the 'ulama' who graduated from madrasas in North India, and at times in Central and West Asia, returned to establish their own madrasas in Bengal, a tradition that still continues.

Most of these madrasas followed a model known as al-Madrasa al-Nizamiyya, which first appeared in Baghdad, Nishapur, and many other important cities in Khurasan under the patronage of Nizam al-Mulk, the famous intellectual Abbasside vizier, in the eleventh century. Soon afterward, these institutions spread to the central and eastern parts of the Islamic world, from Anatolia in the West to Bengal in the East. In South Asia, the curriculum was known as Dars-i-Nizami (after

reserved for madrasa graduates, were now offered only to those formally trained in British law. Still, the colonial power could not completely override local custom, law, and culture, since they needed to understand them to run their administration smoothly. To find a solution, they embarked on introducing a new curriculum and institutions which would accommodate both classical and modern education, effectively serving the needs of the British administration without abruptly upsetting the traditional values of local communities.

Thus, towards the end of the eighteenth century, a new curriculum was introduced under government patronage at Calcutta madrasa, which was established in 1781 during the time of Governor-General Warren Hastings (1773-84). With the passage of time,

THE WTO SHIFT Multilateralism vs Regionalism



Is WTO losing its way?

As major powers increasingly bypass multilateral rules, the WTO's future hinges on whether political will can keep pace with geopolitical change

The WTO's troubles are not sudden; they are cumulative. Over the past decade, the system has been steadily eroded by unilateralism, geopolitical rivalry, and the proliferation of alternative trade arrangements. What was once a rules-based order, now increasingly resembles a patchwork of competing blocs and bilateral deals.

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 was one of the most ambitious acts of post-war economic statecraft. Built on the foundations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), it promised a rules-based system in which countries—large and small—would trade under agreed disciplines rather than raw power. For several decades, that promise broadly held. Trade expanded, supply chains deepened, and hundreds of millions were lifted out of extreme poverty.

That success rested on a deceptively simple idea: predictability. Through binding tariff commitments and the principle of Most Favoured Nation (MFN), where concessions offered to one member must be extended to all, the WTO created a floor of fairness in global commerce. Even amid shocks such as the global financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, this framework helped keep trade flowing.

The results were remarkable. According to WTO estimates, around 1.5 billion people were lifted out of extreme poverty during the era of expanding global trade. The volume of global trade today is more than 47 times higher than in 1950, while real global GDP has grown roughly 15-fold. The multilateral trading system did not achieve this alone, but it provided the scaffolding.

Yet that scaffolding is now under strain.

The WTO's troubles are not sudden; they are cumulative. Over the past decade, the system has been steadily eroded by unilateralism, geopolitical rivalry, and the proliferation of alternative trade arrangements. What was once a rules-based order, now increasingly resembles a patchwork of competing blocs and bilateral deals.

The shift is most visible in the behaviour of major powers. The United States, long the system's chief architect, has grown sceptical of multilateral constraints. In April last year, it imposed reciprocal tariffs on several countries outside WTO norms, bypassing the MFN principle. Such measures signal a willingness to privilege strategic leverage over agreed rules.

Other powers have followed different but equally consequential paths. The rise of BRICS and regional agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership reflects a world in which trade governance is fragmenting. Meanwhile, blocs like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and agreements such as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement have deepened regional integration—often at the expense of multilateral coherence.

The cumulative effect is a drift away from universality. Countries increasingly hedge their bets, signing bilateral deals or joining regional clubs

rather than relying solely on the WTO. No discussion of the WTO's predicament can ignore China. Its rise has been both a product of and a challenge to the multilateral system. By integrating into global markets under WTO rules, China became a manufacturing powerhouse. But its scale and state-led economic model have unsettled other major economies, particularly the United States.

This rivalry has paralysed consensus. Trade disputes between the world's two largest economies now spill into the WTO, where agreement is already difficult among 160-plus members. As a result, negotiations stall, and reforms languish.

Ironically, the very system that enabled China's ascent now struggles to accommodate its presence.

The WTO's institutional machinery is also faltering. Its dispute settlement system—once described as the "jewel in the crown"—has been effectively crippled. Since 2018, the United States has blocked the appointment of judges to the Appellate Body, rendering it unable to hear appeals. Without a functioning enforcement mechanism, rules lose credibility.

Recent ministerial meetings have exposed similar dysfunction. At the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference, held in Cameroon's Yaoundé on March 25-29, members failed to reach consensus on key issues, including e-commerce, fisheries subsidies, and broader institutional reform. Instead, partial and inconclusive outcomes were deferred to future discussions.

Such outcomes are becoming the norm. Negotiations drag on, compromises thin out, and ambition shrinks. As Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, put it, the WTO has been "saved, for the time being," but only by "agreeing to do almost nothing."

Perhaps the most consequential shift is the weakening of the MFN principle itself. Reciprocal tariffs imposed outside WTO disciplines, along with bilateral arrangements such as the United States' Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART), represent a departure

from non-discrimination.

For developing countries, this is particularly troubling. Under the traditional system, they benefited from predictable access to markets and preferential treatment. In a world of bilateral bargaining, however, negotiating power matters more than formal equality. Smaller economies risk being squeezed into unfavourable deals.

Countries like Bangladesh illustrate the dilemma. With limited leverage, they face pressure to accept terms dictated by larger partners. The shift from rules to power tilts the playing field. As Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of RAPID, warned, the system is increasingly becoming one of "rules of power."

Emerging issues are further complicating matters. Digital trade, for instance, has become a major point of contention. Since 1999, WTO members have maintained a moratorium on customs duties for electronic transmissions. Developed countries—major exporters of digital services—want this moratorium to be permanent. Many developing countries oppose this, arguing that it deprives them of revenue and policy space.

Here, too, interests diverge sharply. As Rahman noted, developing countries' interests are "primarily defensive," while those of developed economies are "offensive," reflecting their dominance in digital exports.

Is the WTO adrift?

Despite these tensions, the WTO is not yet obsolete. As Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, its director-general, has noted, roughly 72 percent of global goods trade still occurs under MFN terms— "nearly

three-quarters of global goods trade."

That suggests the system retains a core of stability. Even as countries experiment with alternatives, they have not abandoned multilateralism altogether. The WTO remains a reference point—a baseline for global commerce.

But that baseline is eroding. Okonjo-Iweala has acknowledged that the system is "under threat" even as it continues to provide a "stable core" reflecting a structure that is enduring but under visible strain.

The current moment invites a deeper question: Is the global trading system undergoing a rupture or a transition? One school of thought sees a fundamental break. In this view, the post-war order—anchored in multilateral institutions—is giving way to a more fragmented and contested landscape. Power politics, not rules, will define the future.

Another perspective is more measured. It sees the present as a period of adjustment. As economic power becomes more diffuse, institutions must evolve. The WTO, in this reading, is not collapsing but adapting—albeit slowly and imperfectly.

Okonjo-Iweala frames it more bluntly: the old order has "irrevocably changed"; it will not return; and the task now is to decide what to preserve, what to repair, and what to rebuild.

Three realities stand out. First, the old order will not return. The era of uncontested multilateralism is over. Emerging powers, geopolitical

rivalry, and domestic politics have reshaped the landscape.

Second, the core principles of the WTO still matter. Predictability, transparency, and non-discrimination remain essential for global trade. Even critics of the system rely on these features.

Third, reform is unavoidable. The WTO must find ways to function in a more fragmented world. This may involve greater use of plurilateral agreements, where subsets of members move ahead on specific issues, while preserving a multilateral framework.

As Okonjo-Iweala put it, the task is to identify "what worked well... what did not... and the gaps we must now close."

The greater danger is not sudden collapse but gradual irrelevance. As countries increasingly bypass the WTO—through bilateral deals, regional agreements, or unilateral measures—the institution risks becoming peripheral.

This drift has consequences. Without a strong multilateral anchor, global trade could become more volatile, less predictable, and more unequal. Smaller economies would be particularly vulnerable.

For now, the WTO endures. But endurance is not enough. Without renewed commitment from its members—especially the largest ones—the system may continue to weaken.

The rules-based order, once a cornerstone of global prosperity, is being tested. Whether it adapts or fades will depend less on institutional design than on political will.

And that, at present, is in short supply.

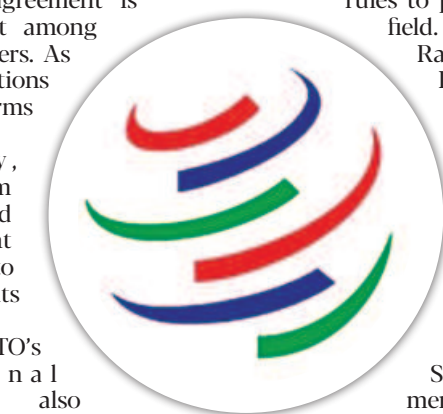


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