

Bangladeshi shot

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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

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"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

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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

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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...'

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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

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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

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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.