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Rid Geneva Camp of drug trade

Arrest ringleaders, make the area safe for its residents

That illegal drug trade continues largely unabated at Geneva Camp in Dhaka's Mohammadpur area despite repeated law enforcement crackdowns is deeply concerning. While it was largely confined to the camp's narrow alleys before, now it has spilled onto the surrounding streets, becoming more organised and visible. Reportedly, around 500 people inside the camp are directly involved in the illicit business, and narcotics are now openly sold near the camp's rear gate. In addition, clashes between rival groups over control of lucrative trading spots have intensified, leaving at least 10 people dead over the past 19 months. This expansion of the trade raises serious questions about the effectiveness of the ongoing law enforcement efforts to stop it.

Geneva Camp's association with illegal drug dealing is not new. It has survived successive governments and countless special drives. About a decade ago, two kingpins reportedly dominated the trade. After they died, smaller groups took over; they now operate under two major rival gangs. After the Awami League government's fall in 2024, violent clashes among these armed groups have become frequent as they continue to fight for dominance. The widespread use of firearms has further alarmed the residents within the camp as well as in neighbouring areas. Although police have recently conducted several raids and arrested dozens of suspects, there has been no visible change.

Illegal substances worth more than Tk 1.5 crore are reportedly sold at the camp daily. Many of those involved in the trade are themselves trapped in the cycle of addiction, debt, and crime, becoming easy recruits for a system that offers quick money with little fear of consequences. While law enforcers appear to be targeting the carriers, street-level sellers, and users, the ringleaders remain beyond reach. As long as they operate with impunity, the network will continue to function as usual.

This state of affairs is unacceptable. Clearly, sporadic drives and arrests are not enough to dismantle these criminal networks. What is needed is a properly planned, intelligence-led operation focused on identifying and apprehending the masterminds who control the flow of drugs and finances in the camp. This must be backed by stronger internal oversight and better coordination among relevant agencies to close the existing gaps. The stories of addiction and exploitation emerging from the camp, on the other hand, highlight the urgent need for rehabilitation, social support, and viable economic alternatives for vulnerable residents. Lastly, people living in and around the Geneva Camp deserve security and relief from the grip of organised crimes. Without urgent action against those at the top, the cycle of raids, arrests, and resurgence will continue, at the cost of public safety.

A denial of space for knowledge, civic life

Expedite the national public library project, open it urgently

It is unacceptable that the Sufia Kamal National Public Library in Dhaka's Shahbagh has been inaccessible to the public for nearly four years. Under a modernisation project, the library building was demolished in 2022 and the new building was set to be completed in December 2024. However, the work is reportedly only 65 percent complete. During this time, the project cost, initially estimated at Tk 524 crore, has gone up to Tk 561 crore due to the addition of new components and an increase in the US dollar exchange rate. Now, a revised proposal to extend the project timeline till December 2027 and to increase the total cost to a staggering Tk 620 crore is waiting to be placed in the next Executive Committee of the National Economic Council.

While piling costs and ever-extending timelines of public projects have become quite common, what is concerning about this library project is how such an essential public place has been closed off from people for so long. The library, when operational, was one of the few places in the capital where an average citizen could access a wide collection of books, magazines, and news publications. The library premises served as a vibrant space for civic engagement through various cultural events and seminars. For young people, spaces such as libraries offer a social environment separate from the home and the workplace or classroom where they can gather to build knowledge, exercise their creativity, socialise, and expand their community. With both physical and digital spaces for free thought and speech shrinking, building more of these institutions is essential so that people can freely engage with culture and practise open-mindedness in their societal view.

Unfortunately, the opposite is happening in Bangladesh. While privately-built food courts, shopping malls, and pricey entertainment venues mushroom, the renovation of necessary public spaces such as parks and libraries remains shrouded in bureaucratic stupor for years on end. Instead of being held accountable, those responsible for the delays are granted endless free passes, deadline extensions, and increased budgets. Meanwhile, children and young people experience unrestrained exposure to digital spaces filled with unverified information and distorted sociopolitical narratives.

We urge the Public Works Department and other relevant authorities to expedite the reconstruction of the Sufia Kamal National Public Library and make it fully accessible to the public. It should serve as a space for not just traditional learning, but also for cultural activities. To build a well-informed nation that can think critically, it is crucial to make knowledge accessible to people. Without this, we may soon find ourselves in a dark age where opinions are only formed based on dominant social media discourse and conspiracies.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Beethoven writes Für Elise

On this day in 1810, Ludwig van Beethoven shared his feelings in a beautiful piano piece called Für Elise. But it wasn't known to the world until 1867, decades after he died, when a scholar found it. And we still don't know who, exactly, the Elise in Beethoven's dedication was—or whether there actually was an Elise.

Bangladesh's food insecurity warning cannot be ignored



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The 2026 Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) carries an uncomfortable message for Bangladesh. The country is not facing famine, nor is it experiencing a catastrophic food crisis *per se*. Yet it appears on a list no country would wish to be on: the top 10 countries and territories with the largest number of people who faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2025. According to the report, around 1.6 crore people in Bangladesh faced crisis-level food insecurity or worse during the 2025 peak, including about 1.56 crore in "Crisis" and four lakh in "Emergency" categories. These represented 17 percent of the analysed population, although the report also notes that the analysed population covered 59 percent of the total population, not the whole country.

Food inflation in Bangladesh in recent years has not been a temporary inconvenience for the poor. It has changed household behaviour. Families have reduced protein intake, shifted to cheaper staples, postponed health spending, borrowed from informal sources, and cut back on children's needs.

The report also says that Bangladesh saw an improvement compared with 2024, with 76 lakh fewer people facing high levels of acute food insecurity. The improvement was linked to the absence of major disasters in early 2025, a decline in food inflation, and increased remittance inflow. But that is exactly why the finding is so troubling. Even in a relatively better year, with fewer major disaster shocks and some relief from food inflation, Bangladesh still had one of the world's largest absolute numbers of people in acute food insecurity.



The real test is not whether Bangladesh can produce enough food in a normal year. It is whether every household can eat adequately, nutritiously, and consistently.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

This indicates that Bangladesh's food insecurity problem is not only about floods, cyclones, droughts, or sudden price spikes. These shocks matter, of course, as they can push vulnerable households into immediate distress. But the persistence of food insecurity points to a more structural problem: low and unstable incomes, weak purchasing power, regional deprivation, climate exposure, inadequate nutrition outcomes, and gaps in social protection. For many households, the crisis is not that food is unavailable in the market, but that food is unaffordable, diets are poor, and coping mechanisms are already exhausted.

Food inflation in Bangladesh in recent years has not been a temporary inconvenience for the poor. It has changed household behaviour. Families have reduced protein intake, shifted to cheaper staples, postponed health spending, borrowed from informal sources, and cut back on children's needs. When rice, edible oil, lentils, eggs, fish, and vegetables remain expensive for long periods, the damage happens on a nutritional level. Children suffer silently. Women often eat last and eat less. Elderly people in poor households become more dependent

on irregular support.

Remittances helped in 2025. That is encouraging, but it should not become a reason for complacency. Remittance inflows are unevenly distributed across regions and households. They support many families, but they cannot substitute for a national food security strategy. A household without a migrant worker, a landless labourer

afford a nutritious diet throughout the year?" This requires regular monitoring of food baskets, not only headline inflation.

Second, social protection must be made more responsive to shocks. Bangladesh has several programmes, but too many are fragmented, poorly targeted, and administratively slow. Food-insecure households need timely cash or food support when prices rise, floods hit, or seasonal employment collapses. Digital databases can help, but only if they are updated, inclusive, and protected from political capture. Urban food insecurity also needs more attention, since low-income urban households have to buy almost everything they consume.

Third, market governance has to improve. Price volatility is often worsened by weak competition, information gaps, stock mismanagement, and sudden import decisions. A smarter food market policy would combine better public stock management, timely imports when needed, transparent market intelligence, and stronger action against collusive behaviour. Farmers must receive fair prices, but consumers cannot be left hostage to avoidable market manipulation.

Fourth, nutrition must sit at the centre of food policy. The aim should not be calorie sufficiency alone. School feeding, maternal nutrition, child nutrition services, fortified foods, safe water, sanitation, and primary healthcare all matter. Food insecurity and malnutrition are linked, but they are not identical. A family may eat every day and still be nutritionally deprived.

Finally, climate resilience has to be treated as a food security policy. Flood control, salinity management, climate-resilient crops, crop insurance, storage facilities, rural roads, and early warning systems are not separate development projects. They are part of the architecture of national food security.

The GRFC 2026 should, therefore, be read as a warning, not as a verdict of failure. Bangladesh has made progress, and 2025 showed some improvement. But 1.6 crore people facing high levels of acute food insecurity is far too large a number for a country aspiring to graduate from LDC status and move towards upper-middle-income ambitions. The real test is not whether Bangladesh can produce enough food in a normal year. It is whether every household can eat adequately, nutritiously, and consistently, even when prices rise, floods come, jobs disappear, or aid declines. For that test, the country still has much work to do.

Will we learn any lesson from the measles deaths?



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Every report of a child dying from the ongoing measles outbreak has left us not only saddened, but ashamed. Measles is not an unknown disease; medical science has long discovered how it spreads, the risks it carries, and how it can be prevented. So when children still die from measles, it is not simply because of the disease but also a clear sign of an inadequate public health system, failure in policymaking, and a lack of national priority. These deaths were not unavoidable. With timely vaccination, proper surveillance, early detection, and effective public awareness, many of them might have been prevented.

This is where the lessons of the Covid pandemic should return with renewed force. Covid taught us that health is not an isolated sector—it is the foundation on which all other sectors depend. When a public health system falters, the economy slows, schools close, jobs become uncertain, social stability weakens, and even national security comes under pressure. Many countries recognised this quickly and acted accordingly. They understood a simple truth: the end of a pandemic does not mean the end of risk. It means the work of preparing for the next crisis must begin immediately.

Unfortunately, in Bangladesh, we did not absorb that lesson with the seriousness it deserved. The recent

measles deaths represent a stark reminder that we still remain largely reactive in handling public health crises. We hold meetings after disease spreads, issue statements after lives are lost, and become active only when the issue gains public attention. But we have not made timely and consistent immunisation, early risk detection, stronger field-level capacity, better data systems, and active emergency preparedness a regular part of health governance.

For this reason, measles deaths should not be viewed as an isolated crisis. They warn us of a much larger reality: our public health system remains fragile, preparedness is incomplete, coordination is weak, and long-term thinking is inadequate. Unless we build a comprehensive biosecurity system, including domestic vaccine production, we may face more loss of life in the future, whether from another pandemic, worsening endemic diseases, or sudden outbreaks.

In fact, treating health crises as temporary events remains to be a persistent error in judgement on our part. We tend to believe that once one wave passes, the danger has passed with it. But public health does not work that way. Threats are layered and continuous. Sometimes, they come as a new virus, sometimes as the return of an old infection, a climate-

related disease spread, antimicrobial resistance, or a rapid transmission driven by urban crowding and poverty. That is why a health system must be prepared not only to treat patients, but also to anticipate risks, respond quickly, make evidence-based decisions, and maintain public trust.

The case of vaccine production makes the weakness in our public

Treating health crises as temporary events remains to be a persistent error in judgement on our part. We tend to believe that once one wave passes, the danger has passed with it. But public health does not work that way. Threats are layered and continuous.

health system even more visible. The state-run Essential Drugs Company Ltd's (EDCL) vaccine production project remains stuck in the land acquisition stage. After the government approved the project in 2023, land was initially acquired in Gopalganj. But in 2025, under the interim government, it was decided that the project would instead be implemented in Munshiganj's Sirajdikhan. Meanwhile, there is still no meaningful effort to build the skilled workforce needed for such a highly technical project. At this point, it is urgent to create an appropriate organogram, recruit the necessary personnel, and place them under proper training both at home and abroad. At the same time, technology

transfer must be secured through agreements with experienced vaccine manufacturers around the world. This issue deserves the urgent attention of the highest levels of government.

Public health is a political commitment. If primary healthcare, immunisation, disease prevention, surveillance, laboratory capacity, emergency preparedness, local health workers, supply systems, and data-driven decision-making are not prioritised, then no crisis is truly unexpected. The ongoing measles situation reflects exactly that condition of unpreparedness. Post-Covid health reform was needed not only on paper, but in practice, and it is still needed now. This is not just about one disease, but the entire system.

The measure of a civilised society is not found just in development statistics. It is also found in the protection it offers to its most vulnerable people. If we cannot protect the lives of children, then our story of development remains incomplete. And if even a warning as serious as measles does not awaken us, the price we pay in the next major health crisis may be even greater. Covid taught us one essential truth: health must come first, everything else follows. The measles outbreak is now teaching us another: if we don't want to lose our children to preventable deaths, ensuring vaccination for every child must be our first priority. And for that, we must build a comprehensive biosecurity system, including vaccine production.

The question now is whether we will turn these lessons into policy, institutions, and action, or continue to nurture a culture of inaction and prepare, once again, only for mourning the next public health crisis.