



Foreigners who come from thousands of kilometres away... have no place there except at the bottom of its waters.

Mojtaba Khamenei
Iran supreme leader on Strait of Hormuz

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

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Solutions lie in talks with opposition

Tarique says in his session-concluding speech in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday said solutions to all national problems must be found through dialogue with the opposition and stressed that stability in parliament is essential for Bangladesh's progress.

"This parliament is made up of you [opposition] and me. If either of us fails, then Bangladesh itself will fail.... Both the ruling party and the opposition must work together, and under no circumstances should parliament be allowed to fail," he said in his concluding speech of the first session of the 13th Jatiya Sangsad.

The session, which began on March 12, ended yesterday after 25 working days. Tarique's address came during the thanksgiving motion



"The ruling party and the opposition must work together, and under no circumstances should parliament be allowed to fail."

Leader of the House Tarique Rahman

"I will not compare whether law and order has improved or worsened. I only want us to live in a safe Bangladesh today."

Leader of the Opposition
Shafiqur Rahman



"We compromised on everything and signed the July National Charter out of compulsion ... what if they blocked the election with the excuse of reforms."

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed

on the president's speech, which was passed by voice vote.

"Agree to disagree is a recognised principle in every parliament across the democratic world. Yes, today much has been said about the July charter, but I will not go into that debate," he said.

The prime minister said consensus had been reached on some bills, while differences remained on others. "From my party's position, I want to state clearly: on issues where we disagree, we will sit with opposition members, we will discuss, and we will find solutions in the national interest."

He reiterated the proposal for making a Deputy Speaker from the opposition. "The opposition did not accept it due to their party's decision. That is their policy matter. But today I want to make it clear once again: this proposal remains open to the leader of the opposition, and opposition MPs. By keeping it open, we have tried to demonstrate our genuine intention."

Tarique warned that obstruction of democracy harms the economy, education, healthcare, and employment. "If we ask an ordinary citizen today what they want, I believe they will say, 'We want peace; we want safe roads.'"

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Indian envoy summoned over Assam CM's remarks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry yesterday summoned acting Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh Pawan Badhe and conveyed Dhaka's displeasure over remarks by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, officials said.

Director General (South Asia) Ishrat Jahan communicated Bangladesh's position to the acting envoy in the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

MAY DAY HOLIDAY

The Daily Star offices will remain closed today on the occasion of May Day. Therefore, the newspaper will not come out tomorrow.

We will serve our readers 24/7 through our website. Stay tuned to our web coverage in English and Bangla.



P3

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DAY

TOILING THROUGH LIFE ... The dust-covered face is that of Kalam Hawlader, 75, who mixes cement, sand, and stone in a concrete mixer for roof casting work all day. Without any protective gear, he is highly susceptible to respiratory illnesses from constant exposure to fine particles. The photo was taken yesterday in Barishal city.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Biman signs \$3.7b deal with Boeing for 14 jets

First delivery in late 2031

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday signed an agreement with US aircraft manufacturer Boeing to purchase 14 aircraft, the largest order in the national flag carrier's history.

Under the deal, Biman will acquire eight Boeing 787-10 Dreamliners, two Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners and four Boeing 737-8

in the presence of senior government officials, diplomats and aviation executives at a city hotel.

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman; Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Afroza Khanam; State Minister MRashiduzzaman Millat; and US Ambassador Brent T Christensen attended the ceremony.

MRashiduzzaman Millat, state minister for civil aviation, said, "Bangladesh is



MAX jets with an estimated list value of about \$3.7 billion or roughly Tk 45,000 crore (calculated at \$1 = Tk 122 as per Google Finance yesterday).

The first Boeing aircraft is scheduled for delivery in November 2031, while the rest are expected to arrive by October 2035.

The agreement was signed by Biman Managing Director Kaizer Soheli Ahmed and Boeing Vice President Paul Righi

moving towards becoming a regional aviation hub, and the addition of new aircraft will support that goal."

Kaizer Soheli Ahmed, also the Biman CEO, said that the airline will have to pay 0.5 percent of the total amount as signing money.

He added that the Export-Import Bank of the United States will arrange the loan

SEE PAGE 12 COL 1

New law excludes supervisors from 'worker' definition

Interim-era protections rolled back within five months

ZYMA ISLAM

The newly passed Labour Act changes the definition of who qualifies as a worker, excluding anyone with a supervisory role from the protections offered by the law.

The Labour Ordinance 2025, passed last year, formally recognised

OTHER CHANGES

- ➡ Provision removed allowing unions and collective bargaining agents to represent workers in court.
- ➡ Large establishments are no longer required to provide provident funds unless two-thirds of workers demand them.

"officers" as workers.

Its predecessor, the Labour Act 2006, strictly limited the definition of a "worker" to mean "any person, including an apprentice, employed in any establishment or industry, either directly or through a contractor [...] but does not include a person employed mainly in a managerial, administrative or supervisory capacity".

For years, this excluded those with managerial duties in their job descriptions from enjoying the rights afforded to other workers.

On November 17, 2025, the interim-era labour ordinance

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Farmers race to save crops as rains pause

Heavy showers forecast

STAR REPORT

For the first time in nearly a week, the sun broke through over the haor, prompting farmers to rush to their fields.

By dawn on Thursday, thousands of farmers of the seven Haor districts and their families went to the field to harvest, haul, thresh and dry Boro paddy.

Roadsides of the 19,000 square kilometres of Haor areas became drying floors, courtyards were buried under freshly cut sheaves, and even children skipped school to help carry grain with their family.

"I felt some relief today as the sun came out," said Rashid Mia, a farmer from Bhuksimuil village in Hakaluki haor in Moulvibazar.

Rashid managed to retrieve the paddy that had sunk into the water but could not dry it due to the rain.

But the sliver of light brought him hope.

Joy Sarkar, a college student from Khaliajuri upazila, was seen harvesting submerged paddy alongside his farmer father.

"Today is somewhat better with a bit of sunshine," he said, adding that they hired three labourers at Tk 1,200 per day to harvest four acres of land that went underwater.

Similarly, Shibli Das, a farmer from Badalpur in Habiganj's Ajmiriganj, who cultivated 13 bighas of leased land by spending over Tk 1.5 lakh, has hired labourers to salvage whatever remains underwater.

In Kishoreganj's Majlishpur Khola, one of the largest drying fields next to the Nikli-Karimganj road, the stillness

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3, 5, B1

SEE PAGE 12 COL 4



PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Several paddy fields have gone under water at Gollapara village in Tanore upazila, Rajshahi. A farmer was seen cutting paddy and ferrying it home by boat yesterday. He said due to low prices he will struggle to recover production costs. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

MY DHAKA

Inside Dhaka’s competitive hierarchy of misery

JANNATUL BUSHRA

Before I start, let me acknowledge something our beloved Dhaka does with unsettling efficiency: it turns almost anything into a competition. Be it overtaking in traffic lanes, gently ignoring the concept of queues at elevators, or using the horn as a full-fledged communication system – nothing here is too small, too trivial, or too unnecessary to be turned into a contest.

And, inevitably, our daily hardship did not escape this civic enthusiasm. If anything, it may be the only category where we are truly world-class – with our informal storytelling!

Confused so far? Let me elaborate!

We all know how Dhaka is a city where even a “short trip” requires emotional preparation. And by preparation, I mean serious preparation – with a water bottle, sunglasses or umbrella, and at least one existential crisis. Time here is not measured in minutes, but in traffic signals survived.

However, we have adapted!

No... not by fixing anything structural, but by developing a response that is far more immediate and, frankly, far more satisfying: complaining!

Not officially, of course, there are no forms to fill... but verbally, often generously and, if needed, aggressively! I realised this the other day when I



IMAGE: AI GENERATED

made an avoidable mistake by saying, “I’m exhausted” to one of my colleagues.

My reasoning, I believed, was sound. A 90-minute commute from Dhanmondi to Banani. Ninety. Minutes. Ninety minutes is a full movie, with a lot of character development.

But my colleague, however, was unimpressed.

“Ninety minutes?” she scoffed. “I left Uttara at 7:00 AM. I’ve finished an entire podcast series on the fall of the Roman Empire. At one point, I reached self-actualisation. At another, I considered starting my office in the back of my car. So, you my dear, were practically teleported by comparison.”

And just like that, my suffering was downgraded from a “valid complaint” to just an “anecdote.”

Why?

Because this is Dhaka. Here, hardship is not something you simply experience and mention – it is something you must substantiate. Preferably with evidence, duration, and a supporting anecdote.

You say you have a headache; someone else has already endured a full-blown migraine, a power fluctuation, or a traffic jam long enough to develop a quiet, complicated bond with the driver.

So, your bad day is never quite bad enough here – because there is always

someone, almost clinically prepared, to counter it with a composed little verdict: “I had it worse.” Not as empathy. Not as solidarity. More like a gentle correction to your version of reality.

There is, of course, a strange kind of comfort in it. If everyone is suffering, no one is uniquely singled out.

You say your day was long; someone else says theirs started yesterday and is still buffering.

And somewhere in that exchange, the complaint stops being just a complaint – it becomes participation. A way of saying: I am here. I endured this too. Let me add my version to the pile.

So maybe that’s the answer. We don’t just complain because things are hard here in Dhaka. That would be far too simple.

We complain because, in a city where very little is predictable and even less is fixable on demand, hardship has quietly become one of the few languages we all speak fluently, confidently, and often, with unnecessary elaboration.

It is how we relate. It is how we compete. It is how we make sense of days that refuse to go as planned.

And perhaps, more tellingly, it is how we reassure ourselves that whatever we went through today, however inefficient, inconvenient, or mildly absurd – it counted for something. Anything!

‘Water congestion, not waterlogging’

LGRD state minister tells JS about Chattogram situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The recent inundation of streets in Chattogram after heavy downpours was “water congestion, not waterlogging”, State Minister for LGRD Mir Shahe Alam said yesterday.

In a statement given in parliament under section 300 of rules of procedure, he said the water congestion occurred at five spots of the port city. Shahe Alam also alleged that reports of the port city being submerged were “utterly baseless, and imaginary. “Old photos from 2024 were circulated to spread misinformation,” he said.

The state minister said he visited Chattogram before joining parliament yesterday on Prime Minister Tarique Rahman’s instructions after Tarique, while answering a supplementary question in the House, had apologised to the residents of the city for their suffering.

“When I spoke to people on the streets, they said they were happy that the PM had apologised to Chattogram residents. They took it very positively, saying that compared to one or two years ago, waterlogging has reduced,” Shahe Alam said.

Chattogram has 57 canals, of which 36 are being developed under a Tk 12,000 crore project implemented by the army through the Chattogram Development Authority, the state minister said.

Work on 30 canals has been completed, while six are ongoing, according to him.

Temporary embankments or barricades built during the work caused the water congestion after heavy rainfall, Shahe Alam explained.

Chattogram recorded 220 millimetres of rainfall on Wednesday, leading to water congestion at the city’s Prabartak Mor and four other points, he said.

After joint efforts, the water was cleared within three to four hours, and by yesterday, there was no water on the streets, the state minister said.

A combined committee led by Mayor Shahadat Hossain was formed yesterday to take immediate action if such incidents recur, the state minister said.

Work on the six canals with embankments has been halted, and instructions have been given to restore water flow within five days, he said.

“For the next monsoon season, we can assure that there’ll be no possibility of waterlogging in Chattogram city unless there is extreme rainfall or tidal surge,” he added.



Solutions lie in talks with opposition

FROM PAGE 1

He said parliament must focus on delivering education and healthcare facilities, resolving the electricity crisis, and creating new jobs.

He said, “History can be debated endlessly. But such debates cannot soothe the mind of a mother whose child is suffering from measles, nor can they provide jobs for the unemployed. We must ensure employment for young people and medicines for children affected by measles.”

Tarique added, “If we cannot maintain stability, if we cannot strengthen the economy, especially in the present context where this parliament began governing the country with a loan of Tk 30 lakh crore, then we cannot move the nation forward.

“Without a stable government, without a stable parliament, we cannot advance. To take the country forward, both sides must work together.”

ACT ON TEESTA, END EXTORTION: SHAFIQU

Shafiqur Rahman, ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami and leader of the opposition in parliament, in his concluding speech, said they respect the constitution as law-abiding citizens.

“Some try to claim that we do not respect the constitution. But if we did not, how could we be here? We are law-abiding citizens. If we dislike the constitution, we may wage a movement – but we will not revolt,” he said.

He demanded visible progress in implementing the proposed Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project.

“When I went to the Teesta basin, I saw the hardship of people there. In the dry season, there is no water. In the monsoon, it drowns; in the dry season, it burns. This is how their lives go on.

“We have heard many stories about the Teesta mega plan. Now we want visible work, not stories. I strongly urge the government to take bold decisions on this. I assure you, 20 crore people will stand beside the government.”

He said, “Extortion is rampant across the country. Not only roadside vendors, but even business owners are forced to pay to run their shops.... Let us pledge from this parliament to make Bangladesh free of extortion, at any cost.”

He added, “I will not compare whether law and order has improved or worsened. I only want us to live in a safe Bangladesh today. Educational institutions must be kept free of all terrorism. We do not want to see any more students killed by machetes or bullets. Children must enter schools and come out as skilled, moral citizens.”

He said, “The war continues, the world is unstable. This crisis is not created by the government. It is global. But our foreign policy must be independent: Bangladesh first. We want boundless friendship, but no masters. Our foreign policy must be based on dignity, equality, and mutual respect.”

He said that “every crime of the fascist era, including killings,

disappearances, torture, rape, violations of humanity”, must be tried, and there must be justice for Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, a July uprising frontliner slain while preparing to contest the national polls.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said, “... This constitution is our existence, our emotion, and it is tied to the blood of millions of martyrs of 1971.”

Many sections and chapters of the constitution have been repeatedly altered, yet “it remains our constitution, the one for which we fought. As Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed rightly said, the president is not just an individual, he is an institution. Without the president after August 5, the state would have plunged into extreme disorder and anarchy, and it is doubtful whether we could have saved the nation.”

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Syed Abdullah Mohammed Taher cautioned if anyone ignores what is beneficial for the country and instead uses a two-thirds majority to do whatever they wish, then the nation will fall behind again.

On the July charter, he said 31 political parties came together to draft it, but later, it was said that whichever party gained a majority would also have its own agenda. “That was never part of our discussion. It amounts to a betrayal of the July charter.”

On the Islami Bank, he said, “The Jamaat-e-Islami has no bank. None of our MPs are directors of Islami Bank, nor have we rescheduled loans. Islami Bank was the product of honest and enterprising people. If you say we had a role in its management, we accept that.”

‘BNP COMPROMISED ON CHARTER’

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed termed the July Charter Implementation Order “illegal”.

The BNP had refrained from speaking out during the issuance of the order by the interim government for the sake of elections, he said.

“We compromised on everything and signed the July National Charter out of compulsion ... what if they blocked the election with the excuse of reforms.”

“If they [opposition] find satisfaction in treating constitutional amendment as reform, then what is the problem? By refusing to join the committee [constitution amendment committee], does it mean the constitution, as it stands after the 15th amendment, will simply continue unchanged?”

He noted that the first decision in the consensus commission was to amend article 70 of the constitution. “There was no question of a note of dissent. On the day the decision was taken, it was agreed that the charter would be drafted with notes of dissent included. And so it was signed.”

Addressing the opposition, he said, “You signed it. We signed it. Let us now implement the July charter.”

He argued that the subsequent implementation order was

unconstitutional and invalid. He recalled that BNP’s standing committee had held a press conference in Gulshan declaring that the party and its allies would accept nothing outside the charter.

“I would remind my young friends that one party exhausted itself by selling the spirit of 1971 and was forced to flee. Let us not turn the spirit of July into political merchandise. July belongs to all of us,” the home minister said.

About freedom of speech, he warned, “What is happening today in the name of free expression on social media – if it is not controlled, if we do not restrain ourselves, I do not know where this nation will end up. Some voices are inside the country, some abroad, some even within households. It seems they alone have freedom of speech, while the rest of us are helpless. If you counter them, the abuse only increases.”

He criticised personal attacks, saying dragging the prime minister’s wife and daughter into vile narratives in the name of freedom will not take us forward. “It will destroy our culture.”

Responding to Jamaat leader Taher’s claim that Jamaat has no bank, Salahuddin said, “They say they have no bank. Yet, when speaking, they claim ownership and take credit. Having a bank is not bad, why deny it?”

Ninety-four bills were passed during the first session of the 13th Jatiya Sangsad.

Two adjournment motions, one on convening a Constitutional Reform Council in line with the July Charter Implementation Order, and the other on the charter’s implementation process, were discussed.

The opposition staged four walkouts, including one protesting President Mohammed Shahabuddin’s opening address.

Indian envoy summoned over Assam CM’s remarks

FROM PAGE 1

afternoon, an official told UNB.

Bangladesh described the remarks as “disparaging”.

The move came after Himanta, in an interview aired by ABP News on April 15, said pushing back even one Bangladeshi is “not an easy thing” because “Bangladesh police” were also stationed at the border.

“You cannot just go and hand them over, they do not accept; there is no extradition treaty between India and Bangladesh.”

When the interviewer asked how they were then sent back, the minister said, “Taking advantage of the night’s darkness, in places where the BDR [now BGB – Border Guard Bangladesh] is not present, we push those people back.”

When the interviewer expressed shock, he admitted, “Yes, that is how we do it.”

The Border Guard Bangladesh was originally formed as the Bangladesh



Himanta Biswa Sarma

Rifles (BDR) and renamed BGB in 2010.

He also said, “You don’t know the truth. What does the BSF do? The BSF holds a person for 10, 20, even 40 days, and when they find a spot where the BDR is not guarding, they push them across.”

The interviewer then asked, “Then they must be able to come back too?” He replied, “Yes, some also come back from Bengal.”

He reiterated, “There is no

director of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, recommended replacing the word “owner” in the law with “employer”, stating that this should “refer only to that person who holds the final authority regarding the appointment of personnel, dismissal from service, and determination of the terms of employment”.

The commission’s final report further said, “All persons in administrative or management roles falling outside this definition shall be considered officers”.

“The labour law shall apply to everyone except the ‘employer’, and they shall come under the purview of legal rights and protections applicable under the labour law.”

AKM Nasim, country programme director of Solidarity Centre Bangladesh and a member of the now-

Bangladesh Garment Sramik Samhati and also a member of the reform commission, said this part of the new law rolls back who is entitled to legal rights as a worker.

“This change was made with the readymade garments sector in mind, so that companies do not have to extend labour rights to line chiefs and supervisors. But we need to think beyond just the garments sector. This labour law applies to the entire workforce of the country.”

Additionally, though the interim-era ordinance allowed unions and collective bargaining agents to represent workers in court, Solidarity Centre, upon review, found that the newly passed law no longer allows this.

Kalpna Akhter, executive director of Bangladesh Center for Workers’ Solidarity, said, “Typically the labour



“This change was made with the garments sector in mind, allowing companies to avoid extending labour rights to supervisors.... But the law applies to the country’s entire workforce.”

TASLIMA AKHTER, coordinator of the Bangladesh Garment Sramik Samhati

defunct labour reform commission, said the amendment to the ordinance passed by parliament on April 10 was introduced suddenly.

“The definition in the interim-era ordinance was agreed upon during discussions at the Tripartite Consulting Council [TCC]. This new change doesn’t reflect those discussions.”

The TCC was a 60-member committee comprising representatives from workers, employers, and the government, activated in 2025 to amend the labour law, among other things.

Taslima Akhter, coordinator of the

leaders could represent workers as their lawyers in court to ease their access to justice. We are looking at this change critically, but we are waiting for the labour rules to be published, which would better flesh out how this change will impact workers’ access to the labour courts.”

Meanwhile, large establishments are no longer required to provide provident funds. The previous ordinance made provident funds mandatory in establishments with over 100 employees. Provident funds are now only mandatory if two-thirds of workers demand them.

extradition treaty between India and Bangladesh through which we can return a Bangladeshi. Bangladesh asks for proof....”

Referring to Assam’s National Register of Citizens process, he claimed 1.7 million “infiltrators” had been identified prima facie.

Himanta said that if authorities tried to proceed officially, the matter would go through India’s Ministry of External Affairs and then to Bangladesh, which, according to him, often refused to accept them as Bangladeshi citizens.

“Then what is the option open for us?”

When questioned over the low official deportation numbers, he said 1,400 people had been pushed back this year following a Supreme Court judgment delivered last year.

He claimed the ruling allowed a district magistrate to pass an eviction order if a person was believed not to be Indian.

Asked where they should be

evicted, the chief minister said, “The law and the court order do not specify where they should be evicted to, so we have started using this to push them back at the border.”

Asked what “push back” meant, Himanta said, “It means you take them to a convenient place and practically push [dhakka] them.”

He added, “We should push them back, but also create an atmosphere so that they leave Assam on their own. When I talk about the ‘5 rupees vs 4 rupees’ example, the meaning is that society should not accept these Bangladeshis.”

On April 26, Himanta, in a post on X, said, “Rude people don’t understand soft language. We continuously remind ourselves of this prophetic line when we expel infiltrators from Assam who don’t leave themselves. For instance, these 20 illegal Bangladeshis who were PUSHED BACK last night. Assam will fight. Pushback WILL CONTINUE.”

Regardless of religion or identity, equal rights for all

Pledges PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday said the government does not engage in religion-based politics, reaffirming its commitment to equal rights and security for all citizens regardless of faith or identity.

“Our government’s view is this – religion belongs to each individual, and everyone has the right to security,” he said, according to a press release from the Prime Minister’s Office.

“Regardless of religion or identity, Bangalee and non-Bangalee, believers and non-believers – all will enjoy equal rights in every field.”

He made the remarks while exchanging greetings with leaders of the Buddhist community on the occasion of Buddha Purnima at a meeting in the conference room of the Ministry of Public Administration at the Secretariat yesterday.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman exchanges greetings with leaders of the Buddhist community on the occasion of Buddha Purnima at a meeting in the conference room of the Ministry of Public Administration at the Secretariat yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Digital IDs, relocation plans rolled out for Dhaka hawkers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday launched coordinated initiatives to ensure pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, regulate activities of hawkers and rehabilitate them through structured systems and digital identification.

At DSCC’s Nagar Bhaban auditorium, Administrator Md Abdus Salam formally inaugurated hawker rehabilitation activities under the proposed “Dhaka City Hawker Management Policy-2026”.

Under the new policy, QR code-enabled digital ID cards and specific locations with operating hours have been designated to hawkers across key areas, including Gulistan, Motijheel, New Market, and Shahjahanpur. Some locations will operate as daily markets, while others will function as evening markets between 6:00pm and 10:00pm.

As part of the initiative, 100 hawkers from the Gulistan area were issued digital IDs and relocated to the link road adjacent to Ramna Bhaban.

Md Salam said the initiative, taken under the prime minister’s directive, aims to create safer, more organised streets while improving the livelihoods of marginal communities through a humane, transformative effort.

DSCC CEO Md Zahirul Islam said the digital ID system would ensure transparency and accountability while allowing traffic police to easily verify vendors’ legality and assigned locations, adding that at least 5-6 feet of

SEE PAGE 5 COL 7

‘Remove, arrest the president’

Nahid renews his call in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Chief Whip and NCP Convener Nahid Islam yesterday renewed his demand in the parliament for the removal and arrest of President Mohammed Shahabuddin, branding him as “corrupt, incompetent, deceitful, and complicit in genocide”.

While taking part in the discussion on the thanksgiving motion on president’s address to the House, he also said the Consensus Commission was pressured through force to insert a “note of dissent” into the July Charter. “It is now time for the Consensus Commission members to speak out on the matter,” he said.



Coming down heavily on the president, Nahid, also a frontline leader of July uprising, said, “We made it very clear that the president must be removed and arrested. He has no right to remain in Bangabhaban or to deliver an address here (in the parliament).”

He went on to outline the president’s “misdeeds”, saying Shahabuddin was appointed as an Anti Corruption Commission commissioner with three objectives – to ensure corruption charges against Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman, to give Awami League a clean chit in the Padma Bridge corruption allegations, and to dismiss corruption cases against Sheikh Hasina and other Awami League leaders during the Fakhruddin-Moinuddin caretaker government.

Nahid questioned why the BNP government still accepts such a person as president.

Nahid acknowledged that he had once

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

BHABADAH REGION

Waterlogging wipes out Boro hopes for 25,000 farmers

Silted rivers, stalled drainage leave 17,800 hectares fallow months after monsoon

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Prolonged waterlogging in the Bhabadah region has left over 25,000 farmers unable to cultivate Boro this season, deepening food insecurity and financial distress across parts of Jashore and Khulna.

Even after the last monsoon, large areas remain submerged despite the presence of drainage infrastructure, rendering the Boro planting window ineffective, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

For farmer Prodip Mondal of Kalishakul village, the promise of recovery has turned into yet another year of loss.

His home lies within half a kilometre of a 21-vent sluice gate meant to drain at least 27 surrounding beels, yet his land remains under more than three feet of water.

Like many others, he tried to recover Aman losses by preparing a Boro seedbed on a nearby plot.

“I thought once the water receded, I would transplant the seedlings to my field, but the water never went down. I couldn’t plant a single sapling this year,” he said.

Now surviving by catching fish, he added, “I couldn’t grow Aman due to waterlogging. I hoped Boro would help me recover some losses. At least we would have rice for the year. But now I have nothing. What will we eat?”

A normal harvest of about 50 maunds would meet his four-member family’s



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

I couldn’t plant a single sapling this year. I couldn’t grow Aman either due to this waterlogging. I hoped Boro would help me recover some losses. At least we would have rice for the year. But now I have nothing. What will we eat?

PRODIP MONDAL
Farmer of Kalishakul village

First and foremost, water must be drained. Without solving the drainage problem, agriculture cannot recover here. If water could be removed in time, much more land could have been cultivated.

SAMOREN BISWAS
Additional deputy director of DAE in Jashore

yearly food needs. “Now I have to buy rice by selling vegetables and catching fish,” he added.

His experience reflects a wider crisis, as more than 250 families in his village alone failed to cultivate Boro this season after their Aman crops were also lost to flooding. Many who once sold surplus rice are now struggling to buy food.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Padma Rani Mondal in Monoharpur village in Monirampur, along with her husband Goutam Mondal, now relies on fish farming and cattle rearing.

They own around one and a half bighas of land in Kapalia Beel but have been unable to cultivate paddy since 2022 due to persistent waterlogging.

FROM PRESS GALLERY



JS removes age limits for BSEC, IDRA appointments

STAR REPORT

The parliament yesterday passed two bills removing age limits for appointing the heads and members of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) and the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA).

The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2026, abolishes the existing 65-year age cap for the BSEC chair and commissioners. The Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (Amendment) Bill,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

1,800 cases filed in the aftermath of July uprising

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman yesterday informed the parliament that 1,855 cases have been filed across police stations in various districts in the aftermath of July uprising over murders, enforced disappearances, and torture.

Responding to a question from MP Anwarul Islam, the minister said 799 of the cases relate to murder, while 1,056 fall under other legal provisions.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Workplace deaths triple in first quarter of 2026: HRSS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 72 workers were killed in workplace accidents across the country in the first three months of 2026 – more than triple the number recorded during the same period last year.

According to data presented yesterday by the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), a total of 168 workplace deaths were reported in 2025. Of these, 19 occurred in the first quarter and 64 in the final quarter.

The rights body described the recent spike in workplace casualties as “concerning”.

The data also showed that 573 workers were injured in the first three months of this year, nearly double the 294 injuries reported during the same period in 2025. These injuries resulted from workplace accidents, police action during protests, and other forms of violence, HRSS said.

The findings were presented at a discussion titled “Workers’ Rights are Human Rights”, organised ahead of International Workers’ Day, which is set to be

observed today.

Speaking at the event, Nagorik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna criticised the absence of workers’ representation in parliament, saying their rights and demands remain largely ignored.

Referring to the July uprising, he said students led the movement by risking their lives, expanding



citizens’ freedom of speech. However, representation of both students and workers in the current government remains minimal.

He expressed regret that despite parliament being in session for a considerable period, there has been no discussion on workers’ rights, living standards, or economic challenges.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Members from low-income families queue behind a TCB truck to purchase essential food items at subsidised prices. Many are increasingly reliant on the government programme as it provides basic goods, such as rice and lentils, at lower-than-market prices amid rising living costs. The photo was taken in Dhaka’s Shyamoli area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

MARCH 7 SPEECH HC grants bail to Emi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted ad interim bail to Sheikh Tasnim Afroz Emi, former vice-president of Shamsunnahar Hall Union at Dhaka University, in an anti-terrorism case filed over playing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s March 7 speech on a loudspeaker.

The court also issued a rule asking the government to explain why Emi should not be granted permanent bail in the case.

The HC bench of Justice KM Zahid Sarwar and Justice Sheikh Abu Taher issued the rule and passed the order following a petition filed by Emi seeking bail.

There is no legal bar to Emi’s release following the High Court order, her lawyer, Muhammad Noman Hossain, told The Daily Star.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Seraj Uddin Ahmed's death anniv today

CITY DESK

Today is the 41st death anniversary of Seraj Uddin



Ahmed, founder chairman of Elite Paint Group of Companies, said a press release.

He was also founder director of ArabBangladesh Bank Ltd, former president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries and former chairman of Tea Traders Association of Bangladesh (TTAB).

A milad mahfil followed by ziafat will be held at Golf Garden, Army Golf Club, Dhaka. A similar programme will also be held in Chattogram.

1,800 cases

FROM PAGE 3

He said investigations have so far been completed in 158 cases, with charge sheets submitted in all of them – 48 for murder and 110 for other offences. The remaining 1,697 cases are still under investigation.

Asaduzzaman said the large volume of cases has made the process complex and time-consuming. However, police are working to submit reports as quickly as possible while ensuring proper evidence collection and due legal procedure so that trials are not weakened by technical flaws.

On the issue of bail, he said the matter lies entirely within the jurisdiction of the courts.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to securing justice for victims and their families.

Answering another query from Muhammad Ali Asgar MP, the law minister said the government does not maintain statistics on how many such cases were politically motivated, as police reports do not record the political affiliation of accused persons.

However, citing data from BNP headquarters, he said between 2007 and January 11, 2025, a total of 1,42,983 false and harassment cases were filed against BNP activists.

The minister also said that since assuming office, the current government has withdrawn 23,865 “politically motivated” cases.

JS removes age limits for BSEC, IDRA appointments

FROM PAGE 3

2026, removes the 67-year limit for the IDRA chair and members.

A debate followed the passage of the bills, with opposition MPs questioning the timing and intent of the amendments and raising broader concerns over recent regulatory appointments, including that of the Bangladesh Bank governor. Treasury bench members rejected the allegations.

Independent MP Rumeen Farhana moved to send the bills to a public opinion review committee, effectively limiting further formal discussion. Although several opposition MPs sought to speak, the speaker allowed Opposition Leader Shafiqur Rahman to participate.

Shafiqur Rahman objected to the legislative process, saying members had not received the bills in time.

“We were supposed to receive the bills three days earlier, but we didn't even get them a day before. We just received them on our

desks. I request you not to curtail our rights,” he said.

The speaker said the report had been circulated the previous day and that proceedings were within his discretion, before moving to pass the bills.

After the passage, NCP's Akhter Hossen questioned whether the removal of age limits was intended to favour specific individuals.

He also recalled that during BNP's tenure in 2001, the retirement age of the Chief Justice was raised, which he said led to prolonged national suffering.

“If something similar happens in the future, the government will have to take responsibility,” he added.

Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury defended the amendments, saying they reflected demographic and economic realities.

“When the securities law was first enacted, the average age was 57. Now it is 72. Given the new economic context, if qualified individuals want to

serve, we must take this into account. There is no room for emotion here,” he said.

He added that parliamentary rules typically restrict debate after a bill's passage, but he responded to address concerns raised.

Opposition Leader Shafiqur Rahman also criticised recent appointments to financial institutions, including the central bank governor, alleging a lack of neutrality.

“If everything is politicised and family or group interests are prioritised, the country will not progress,” he said.

Deputy Opposition Leader Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher went further, questioning the governor's neutrality.

“He was part of BNP's election steering committee... he should be removed, and a qualified governor appointed,” he said.

The finance minister rejected the claim, saying political association did not determine affiliation.

“Supporting a party does not make someone a party man. Assisting in election activities does not make someone a party man,” he said, adding that

appointments during BNP rule were also non-political and maintained that the current governor's performance has been strong.

Regardless of religion

FROM PAGE 3

Purnima at the Public Administration Hall of the Cabinet Division at the Secretariat.

He also extended greetings to the Buddhist community on the occasion.

During the meeting, Tarique said building a state and society where citizens can freely practise their religious beliefs without obstruction remains a key responsibility of the government.

The administration's political philosophy is “Bangladeshi nationalism”, he added.

“It has been proven many times in Bangladesh that only this philosophy can ensure coexistence among all races, religious

communities and ethnic groups,” he said.

“So, none of you should ever think of yourselves as minorities. The state belongs to all of us. Every citizen is Bangladeshi,” he added.

“Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians – together, with the sacrifice of millions of lives, we achieved independence. During the Liberation War, no one asked who followed which religion,” he said.

“This independent Bangladesh belongs to all of us.”

At the event, the Buddhist community presented the prime minister with a commemorative crest and a replica of a Buddha statue.

HC grants bail

FROM PAGE 3

He said Emi is currently in Kashimpur women's jail. “We will submit the bail bond to the concerned lower court after receiving the High Court order. She may be released on Sunday or Monday once the necessary formalities are completed,” he added.

On March 7, around 9:30pm, Emi and several others played the speech in front of Shahbagh Police Station.

While the speech was being played over a microphone mounted on a rickshaw, a group of DU students – including Ducusu leaders AB Zubayer and Mosaddek Ali Ibn Mohammad, as well as Jatiya Chhatra Shakti Convener Tahmid Al Modassir – reportedly obstructed the programme.

At one stage, AB Zubayer and Mosaddek Ali handed over two persons, including Emi, to Shahbagh Police Station.

The following day, the detainees were shown arrested in a case filed under the Anti-Terrorism Act with Shahbagh Police Station and were sent to jail. Police filed the case as the complainant.

Remove, arrest

FROM PAGE 3

taken oath as an interim government adviser under the same president. The context then was not the same as now, he said. After the July uprising, they had two options: form a national unity government – which BNP rejected – or hand power to the army.

He said that had they chosen the latter, it is doubtful the ruling party would be sitting here today. “For the sake of stability, we joined the government at that time.”

He added that now, under an elected government, BNP has the authority to replace the president.

On the referendum, he said after election, BNP took a different stance. They should have clarified beforehand that they did not recognise the referendum, that whether “yes” or “no” won, it had nothing to do with them. “But they did not do so.” He also reiterated that the Constitution Reform Council should be formed without delay.

Nahid said the 1972 constitution was inherently undemocratic. “It was drafted with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the forefront. The seeds of authoritarianism were sown in Bangladesh through the '72 constitution, which was written in the spirit of Mujibism,” he added.

He said, “Through the Sepoy-People's Revolution in 1975, there was an opportunity to abolish the '72 constitution. We missed

that chance. With respect, I say, Ziaur Rahman made that historic mistake. In 2024, another opportunity came, and we are still missing it.”

Accusing BNP of shifting from its position, Nahid said, “If they move away from their stance, then we too must return to our earlier position and demand a rewriting of the constitution. If BNP remains steadfast in support of the '72 constitution, then we must respond accordingly.”

Nahid said unnecessary debate is being created over the July uprising. “None of us ever claimed that the uprising was greater than the Liberation War, or greater or lesser than the 1990 movement,” he said.

“The July uprising is a distinct event in Bangladesh's history. The Liberation War is also a distinct event – it is the foundation of Bangladesh. On this, we are uncompromising; there is no scope for debate.”

Ivy gets HC bail

FROM PAGE 5

Advocate Md Motaher Hossain Sazu, a lawyer for Ivy, told The Daily Star.

Senior lawyers Sara Hossain and Motaher Hossain Sazu appeared for petitioner while Deputy Attorney General Syeda Shajia Sharmin opposed the bail petitions during the hearing of the bail petitions.

Leadership void stirs

FROM PAGE 5

Tea workers' leader Sitaram Bin cited disputes over constitutional amendments, changes in the election commission's structure, and a shortage of funds for the prevailing situation.

“The delay in holding elections is weakening the democratic structure of the union. Leadership without accountability – through expired or ad hoc committees – cannot properly represent workers,” he added.

For tea garden workers, the cost of the impasse continues to be reflected in low wages, inadequate accommodation and healthcare, and weakened collective bargaining rights.

Sanjoy Kanto Das, adviser to Cha Sramik Oikyo, said that the Bangladesh Tea Workers Union (B-77) was established to safeguard workers' wages and rights

– not to serve political interests.

“However, in recent years, the union has frequently acted under the influence of the ruling party, often prioritising government favour over the legitimate demands of workers. The 2023 gazette further weakened the union by restricting its authority to negotiate wages for five years, yet the leadership failed to protest it,” he also said.

Consequently, long-standing problems in tea gardens remain unresolved, and dissatisfaction among workers continues to grow.

Moulvibazar Deputy Commissioner Touhiduzzaman Pavel said the tea workers' leaders had submitted a memorandum demanding the union elections. Steps will be taken after talking to the director general of the Department of Labour.

Workplace deaths

FROM PAGE 3

Manna also criticised ongoing debates on state reform and constitutional amendments, saying it remains unclear how these would benefit workers.

He further alleged that rising costs of essentials, gas, and fuel are not being addressed effectively and that social safety net benefits are not reaching the intended recipients.

Manna urged labour leaders to link the labour movement with mainstream politics and build an accountable mass movement to establish a welfare state.

Bangladesh Sramik Kalyan Federation President Advocate Atiqur Rahman said, “Half of those killed in the July movement were workers. Yet, reform commissions have failed to address the concerns of 7.5 crore

workers.”

He also criticised the continued use of child labour in garment factories.

Rabita Islam, deputy director of Karmojibi Nari, highlighted wage discrimination and harsh conditions faced by female garment workers.

“Workers receiving minimum wages are often laid off as they age and are forced to join subcontracting factories, where they earn only Tk 5,000 to Tk 7,000 a month,” she said.

She also pointed to the lack of daycare facilities for working mothers and arbitrary termination practices in the sector.

The discussion was chaired by former National Human Rights Commission commissioner Nur Khan Liton.



UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA
MASTER OF PROFESSIONAL FINANCE (MPF)
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

Admission Notice

For Application: mpf.finanancedu.ac.bd/admission
Application last date: May 4, 2026. **Admission test date:** May 8, 2026 (Friday) at 10:00 AM (Written) and 11:15 AM (Viva-voce).

For more information: MPF Program Office (Room 4005), 3rd Floor MBA Building, Faculty of Business Studies, University of Dhaka
Email: mpf@du.ac.bd, Cell: +8801725288250 and +8801914379230.



পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলসি
POWER GRID BANGLADESH PLC
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212 Web: www.powergrid.gov.bd
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e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার গ্রিডের জিএমডি, কালিয়াকৈর দপ্তরের আওতাধীন নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র e-GP পোর্টালে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

ID	Title of Works
1239360	Construction of property line demarcation structure around substation boundary wall at Ghatail 132/33 kV Grid Substation under GMD Kaliakair, Power Grid Bangladesh PLC.

আগ্রহী ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

মোহাম্মদ হাসানুল ইসলাম
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, জিএমডি, কালিয়াকৈর

Industrial Land with Factory Shed for Sale

273 decimal industrial land with factory shed located in Kachpur, Sonargaon, Narayanganj area will be sold. The land is directly connected to Dhaka - Chittagong highway.

Contact : 01958-069455, 01408-717121

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
PWD E/M Wood Workshop Division-1, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka

Memo No-25.36.2680.534.14.170.26-2106 Date- 30/04/2026

e- Tender Notice

This is to notify all concern that the following tenders are invited in the national e-GP portal:

Tender ID No.	Last Selling Date	Opening Date
1266671	17/05/2026	17/05/2026
1267567, 1267585, 1267607 & 1267637	24/05/2026	25/05/2026

This tenders are online Tender where only e-Tenderer will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(স্বাক্ষর) (Signature)
Executive Engineer (E/M)
PWD E/M Wood Workshop Division-1,
Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka.
Email: ee_wood@pwd.gov.bd

GD-971



Corporate HQ
2/F HRC Bhaban, 46 Kawran Bazar C.A., Dhaka-1215

This is for information of all concerned that the Board of Directors of ONE Bank PLC in its 414th Meeting held on April 30, 2026 from 3:00 p.m. at its Board Room, Corporate Headquarters, HRC Bhaban, 46 Kawran Bazar C.A., Dhaka-1215, has approved/decided/recommended the followings in respect of 27th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Shareholders of the Bank for the year ended December 31, 2025.

- Recommended Dividend** : No Dividend for the year 2025
- Date and Time of 27th AGM (Hybrid)** : August 13, 2026 from 11:00 a.m.
- Record Date for AGM** : June 11, 2026

AGM Venue	Hybrid system in combination of physical presence at Lakeshore Grand, House No. 46, Road No. 41, Gulshan 2, Dhaka-1212 and virtually by using Digital Platform through the link https://obplc.bdvirtualagm.com															
• Solo <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Particulars</th> <th>Dec 31, 2025</th> <th>Dec 31, 2024</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Net Asset Value (NAV)</td> <td>Tk. 23,367,330,879</td> <td>Tk. 23,550,246,746</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Net Asset Value (NAV) Per Share</td> <td>Tk. 21.92</td> <td>Tk. 22.10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Earning Per Share (EPS)</td> <td>Tk. 0.20</td> <td>Tk. 1.20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Net Operating Cash Flow Per Share (NOCFPS)</td> <td>Tk. 0.72</td> <td>Tk. 6.83</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Particulars	Dec 31, 2025	Dec 31, 2024	Net Asset Value (NAV)	Tk. 23,367,330,879	Tk. 23,550,246,746	Net Asset Value (NAV) Per Share	Tk. 21.92	Tk. 22.10	Earning Per Share (EPS)	Tk. 0.20	Tk. 1.20	Net Operating Cash Flow Per Share (NOCFPS)	Tk. 0.72	Tk. 6.83
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By order of the Board of Directors,



Mohammad Mahtab Uddin, FCS
EVP & Board Secretary

Dhaka
April 30, 2026

Leadership void stirs unrest in tea gardens

No elections for eight years leave workers without representation

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The Bangladesh Tea Workers Union has gone through eight years without an election, leaving workers without elected representation for the third consecutive tenure.

The situation is raising concerns over a leadership vacuum, internal feuds, and growing worker dissatisfaction.

Founded in 1948, the union represents over one lakh workers across tea gardens in the country's north-eastern districts.

The union last held its triennial polls on June 24, 2018. Under its constitution, although fresh elections were due in 2021 and again in 2024, it was not held in either year, leaving the same committee in office for nearly twice its mandated term.

The union has a three-tier structure -- panchayat (garden-level), valley, and central committees -- each elected directly by workers for three years. With the terms long expired, many of these committees have effectively become inactive.

Workers say the absence of elected representation has weakened their ability to raise grievances or negotiate with garden authorities.

Geeta Rani Kanu, a labour leader, said expired committees lacked the legitimacy to negotiate effectively with estate owners, leaving workers' demands unaddressed.

Selim Ahmed, a Rajghat Union Parishad member and tea workers' leader, alleged that unelected individuals were clinging to power.



"We have repeatedly demanded elections and even issued ultimatums, but there has been no action," he added.

Observers linked the clash between two groups of workers at Teliapara Tea Garden in Madhabpur upazila of Habiganj on February 23 this year to disputes stemming from the absence of an elected panchayat committee.

"In the absence of legitimate leadership, misunderstandings, internal feuds, and violence are increasing. Timely elections could have prevented such divisions," said Lalon Tanti, president of the Teliapara panchayat.

Current union leaders, however, rejected the allegation of stagnation and cited financial and administrative hurdles to holding the elections.

They said a letter was sent to the Department of Labour in 2022 seeking support for the polls, but the process stalled.

"We have taken steps, including communicating with the Department of Labour, but financial and administrative complications have delayed the process," said Nripen Paul, acting general secretary of the union's central committee.

He acknowledged that expired committees did not enjoy the same acceptance among workers as elected ones and that problems were emerging in many gardens as a result.

Pankaj Kanda, vice-president of the union, admitted the leadership itself was uneasy with the situation.

"It is not easy to remain in charge without an election for so long," he said. "We also feel uncomfortable continuing without a fresh mandate, but the situation is beyond our control."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

74 shade trees felled in Moulvibazar tea garden

MINTU DESHWARA

Miscreants have cut down 74 shade trees at Mirtinga Tea Garden in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar, triggering concern among authorities, workers, and industry stakeholders over its potential impact on tea production.

Officials of the estate, operated under Deundi Tea Company Limited, said incidents of tree theft and destruction have increased in recent months, disrupting operations and raising fears about long-term sustainability.

According to garden authorities, three shade trees were stolen on April 2 and another on April 16, with losses estimated at around Tk 1.5 lakh. Despite reporting the incidents to police and taking initial measures, the situation worsened.

In the latest incident, around 11:00pm on April 22, miscreants cut down 71 newly planted acacia shade trees along both sides of the main road between sections 18 and 20 of the garden.

The perpetrators fled, leaving the felled trees behind. On-duty watchmen were questioned but failed to provide satisfactory explanations.

Authorities have filed a general diary with Kamalganj Police Station and urged law enforcement

agencies to act swiftly.

Garden officials warned that continued theft and destruction could threaten the estate's viability, noting its contribution to government revenue as part of Bangladesh's export-oriented tea sector.

Leaders of the Bangladesh Tea Workers Union and the garden's



panchayat condemned the incident and demanded a fair investigation and exemplary punishment.

Union leader Dhana Bauri and Panchayat President Montu Almik stressed the need for urgent action to identify those responsible.

Mirtinga Tea Garden Deputy Manager Rezaul Hayat Khan (Emon) said workers and the bagan panchayat (garden council) have

strongly protested the incident and are seeking justice. "The cutting down of shade trees must be stopped on an urgent basis to protect the tea industry," he said.

Nurul Muhaimin Milton, president of a tea workers' union unit in Moulvibazar, said shade trees regulate microclimatic conditions, protect tea bushes from excessive

sunlight, reduce soil moisture loss, and enrich soil through leaf litter.

He warned that their sudden removal exposes plants to heat stress, reducing leaf quality and yield in the short term and potentially causing long-term productivity losses. "Such acts disrupt biodiversity, increase soil erosion, and weaken the overall ecological stability of the garden," he added.



Workers process split peas at a factory in Khuina's Koia Bazar area, sorting, cleaning, drying, and packaging the lentils. They earn Tk 400 a day while the product is sold to wholesale markets countrywide at Tk 100-115 per kg. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

RANGPUR REGION

Continuous rain floods paddy, maize fields

S DILIP ROY

Vast low-lying areas across Rangpur, including mature Boro paddy and maize fields across its five districts, have been inundated after the last five days of continuous rainfall.

At the same time, water levels in at least 26 rivers -- including the Brahmaputra, Teesta and Dharla -- are rising. While none have crossed the danger mark, officials have warned that continued rain and upstream water descending could trigger an early flood.

Since Saturday, persistent rain has severely disrupted harvesting, forcing farmers to hire labour at higher wages to salvage ripened paddy and ready-to-harvest maize from submerged fields.

In many areas, farmers are harvesting crops while standing in water, while others worry they will be unable to dry produce due to a lack of sunshine.

Mostafizur Rahman, in charge of the Rangpur Weather Office, said the region has been receiving an average of around 120 millimetres of rain daily since Saturday.

This marks a sharp rise in rainfall compared to last year's 7.5 millimetres during the same period (April 20-30), underscoring an unusually intense weather pattern with growing risks for agriculture and flooding in the northern region.

Rakibul Hasan, executive engineer of the Water Development Board in Kurigram, said that further rainfall, combined with upstream runoff, could trigger sudden flooding in riverbank areas. He warned that char lands and croplands that recently

emerged from riverbeds are already waterlogged.

Shaykhul Arifin, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Lalmonirhat, said waterlogging is preventing harvesting in several low-lying areas, raising concerns over crop quality deterioration.

Nazar Ali, 65, of Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila, said his eight bighas of ripe Boro paddy are submerged. "I am harvesting with hired labour at double the usual

Sadar, said char lands that were dry on Monday were submerged by Wednesday morning. "Much of the paddy is still unripe. If the water rises further, losses will be heavy," he said.

Agricultural labourer Shah Jamal, 48, of Rangpur's Gangachara upazila, said working in inundated fields has slowed harvesting and pushed up wages, while persistent rain has made fieldwork increasingly difficult.

The Department of Agricultural Extension claimed Boro paddy



cost. If I wait, the crop will be ruined," he said.

Abdus Samad, 70, of Kurigram's Ulipur upazila, said paddy on six bighas and maize on 10 bighas are under water. "Even if I harvest, I cannot dry them due to the rain. I don't know what to do," he said.

In Rangpur's Kaunia upazila, farmer Shamsul Alam said harvested maize and paddy are now piled up at home but cannot be threshed due to continuous rain, raising fears of spoilage.

Khadimul Islam, 50, of Kurigram

has been cultivated on 5,09,095 hectares and maize on 1,27,230 hectares across Rangpur's five districts -- Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Gaibandha and Nilphamari. Maize harvesting is in full swing, while Boro harvesting has begun in low-lying areas.

Officials and farmers alike fear that if rainfall continues and sunshine does not return soon, both standing and harvested crops could suffer significant damage, with wider implications for the region's agricultural economy.

JULY CHARTER

11-party to rally in 7 divs from May 16

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 11-party alliance led by Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami will rally in seven divisional cities, demanding implementation of the referendum verdict on reforms under the July charter.

Party Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad made the announcement yesterday at a briefing following the alliance's liaison committee meeting at Jamaat's central office in Moghbazar, Dhaka.

The first rally will be held in Rajshahi on May 16. Subsequent programmes are scheduled for Chattogram on June 13, Khulna on June 20, Mymensingh on June 27, Rangpur on July 11, Barisal on July 18, and Sylhet on July 25. A grand rally will be staged in Dhaka around October.

Azad also said the coalition plans to hold opinion-exchange meetings with different professional groups to build public support.

At the briefing, National Citizen Party Spokesperson Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain said the 11-party will continue its street movement alongside the divisional rallies.

Ivy gets HC bail in two murder cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted ad-interim bail to Selina Hayat Ivy, former mayor of Narayanganj City Corporation (NCC), in two separate murder cases filed in connection with the July uprising.

The court also issued two separate rules asking the government to explain why Ivy should not be granted permanent bail in the cases.

The bench of Justice KM Zahid Sarwar and Justice Sheikh Abu Taher issued the orders and rules following two separate petitions filed by Ivy seeking bail in the cases.

The cases were filed with Siddhirganj Police Station in Narayanganj on charges of killing Selim Mondal and Abdus Salam during the July uprising in 2024.

Selina Hayat Ivy was shown arrested in the cases immediately after the High Court granted her bail in five other cases on February 26 this year, Senior

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Digital IDs, relocation

FROM PAGE 3

sidewalk space must always remain open for pedestrians.

Meanwhile, DNCC Administrator Md Shafiqul Islam Khan inaugurated a parallel initiative at DNCC Nagar Bhaban by distributing digital ID cards to 202 hawkers operating in Mirpur-10, Mirpur-1, and Mirpur-2.

Of them, 102 are being relocated from Mirpur-10 to Mirpur-13 WASA Road, while the remaining 100 will move to an open space near Gabtoli kitchen market. Authorities confirmed that a total of 829 hawkers have been listed, and the rest will be brought under the system in phases.

DNCC officials said the relocation process was finalised after consultations with the hawkers and with support from law enforcers.

A monitoring committee, comprising DNCC and police representatives, will oversee implementation, while plans are under consideration to establish a dedicated "Hawkers' Market" in the future.

Both city corporations stressed that hawkers must operate only in designated areas and are prohibited from building permanent structures and warned that eviction drives will be conducted against unlicensed or non-compliant vendors after a limited transition period.

Officials also confirmed that no markets will be allowed on playgrounds, school grounds, or near places of worship, while law enforcers have been instructed to strictly prevent illegal extortion from hawkers.

BRAC Institute of Languages celebrates 20 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BRAC University's BRAC Institute of Languages (BIL) celebrated its 20th anniversary yesterday with a showcase of books, poetry, drama, dance and music, said a press release.

Speaking as a special guest, BRAC University Vice-Chancellor Prof Syed Ferhat Anwar said the university fosters intercultural dialogue to strengthen its role as a leading institution of the Global South.

British Council Country Director Stephen Forbes, chief guest, underscored the power of languages in connecting people and cultures.

BIL founder and adviser Lady Syeda Sarwat Abed, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees Tamara Hasan Abed and BRAC Institute of Educational Development Executive Director Erum Mariam also attended.

BIL Director Prof Shayla Sultana wrapped up the celebration with reflections on its journey and future vision.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Bangladesh Police				
Office of the Superintendent of Police, Chattogram				
Memo No. Ration/2517 /1st Volume			Date: 29/04/2026	
e-GP Tender Notice				
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of the following packages. Tender Package description				
Package No.	Package name	Tender ID	Last selling date and time	Closing and opening date and time
Soyabean Oil/RS/ctg/ 2025-26/ 4thQrt	Procurement of fortified Soyabean Oil for ration of Chattogram district police (4th Quarter). FY-2025-2026 (01 April/2026 to 30 June/2026)	1267949	10-May-2026 17:00	11-May-2026 12:30
This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.				
The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited through online at any branches of registered bank.				
Further information and guidelines are available in National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).				
 29.04.2026 Mohammad Nazer Ahamed Khan BP-7708121620 Superintendent of Police, Chattogram Phone: 02-41355536, Fax: 41355537 E-mail: spchittagong@police.gov.bd				
GD-667				



Mourners gather around the coffins of three Lebanese Civil Defense members who were killed in an Israeli airstrike on the town of Majdal Zoun, during their funeral in the southern city of Tyre yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Putin, Trump discuss Iran, Ukraine in phone call

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by phone with US counterpart Donald Trump, Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov said Wednesday, adding the two leaders discussed the Middle East war and Ukraine.

The call lasted more than 90 minutes and was “frank and businesslike”, Ushakov told reporters, including from AFP, during a phone briefing.

The presidents “paid particular attention to the situation regarding Iran and in the Persian Gulf”, Ushakov said.

“Vladimir Putin considers Donald Trump’s decision to extend the ceasefire with Iran to be the right one, as this should give negotiations a chance and, overall, help to stabilise the situation.”

But Putin also “highlighted the inevitable and extremely damaging consequences not only for Iran and its neighbours, but also for the entire international community, should the US and Israel resort to military action once again”, Ushakov said.

He added Russia was “firmly committed to providing every possible assistance to diplomatic efforts” on the Middle East war, and said the call was held at Moscow’s initiative.

In Washington, Trump told reporters he had had a “very good conversation” with Putin, though he said it had focused more on the Ukraine war than on Iran.

Trump added that Putin wanted to “help” end the US-Israeli war on Iran but that he had told the Russian leader to end the Ukraine invasion first.

Press freedom at lowest level in 25 years: RSF

AFP, Paris

Press freedom has fallen to its lowest level in a quarter of a century, Reporters Without Borders warned yesterday.

The media rights watchdog cited as examples US President Donald Trump’s “systematic” attacks on journalists and Saudi Arabia, which executed a journalist in 2025.

“For the first time in the (RSF) Index’s 25-year history, more than half the world’s countries now fall into the ‘difficult’ or ‘very serious’ categories for



press freedom,” a statement said.

“The average score for all countries and territories worldwide has never been so low,” it said.

At the same time, the share of the world’s population living in a country where the press freedom situation is considered “good” has plunged from 20 percent to less than one percent.

Only seven countries in Northern Europe, led by Norway, fall into this category.

The United States, which had already fallen from a “fairly good” to a “problematic” situation in 2024, the year of Donald Trump’s re-election, has dropped a further seven places to 64, it said.

Beyond Trump’s attacks on the press — “a systematic policy” — the

situation in the United States has also been marked by the detention and subsequent expulsion of Salvadoran journalist Mario Guevara, who denounced the arrest of migrants, and by drastic cuts to funding for US international broadcasting, the report said.

“Vladimir Putin’s Russia (172nd) has become a specialist in using laws designed to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism to restrict press freedom,” RSF warned.

“As of April 2026, the country held

48 journalists behind bars”.

The steepest decline in 2026 was in

junta-led Niger (120th, down 37 places). That “underscored the wider decline in press freedom in the Sahel region seen in recent years as attacks by armed groups and ruling juntas have suppressed the right to balanced information from diverse sources,” RSF said.

Norway held the top spot in the rankings for the 10th year running, said RSF, while Eritrea came last for the third straight year.

The biggest improvement in press freedom had been in Syria following the ouster of Bashar al-Assad in late 2024.

While it climbed 36 places in the rankings to 141 in the rankings, RSF warned that the press freedom situation there remained “very serious”.

Mamdani calls on King Charles to return Koh-i-Noor

AFP, New York

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani called for King Charles to “return” the prized Koh-i-Noor diamond, which the British Empire took from the Indian subcontinent in the 1800s, on the third day of the monarch’s state visit on Wednesday.

Before greeting Charles and Queen Camilla at a 9/11 memorial event, Mamdani was asked what he would discuss with the king if he had the chance.

“If I was to speak to the king, separately from that, I would probably encourage him to return the Koh-i-Noor diamond,” the leftist mayor said.

It’s unclear whether Mamdani followed through and brought up the contentious subject with Charles when the two met.

The monarch was seen laughing with Mamdani and having a brief conversation after they shook hands.

Housed in the Tower of London, the massive 106 carat stone is the star of Britain’s crown jewels, adorning the Crown of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

The ownership of the jewel has been contested over the centuries, passing through the hands of Mughal emperors, Iranian shahs and Sikh maharajas before the Kingdom of Punjab gave it to Queen Victoria in 1849 as part of a peace treaty.



Gaza flotilla: 211 activists ‘kidnapped’ by Israel

AFP, Athens

Organisers of a Gaza-bound aid flotilla yesterday said Israel’s army had “kidnapped” 211 activists, including a Paris city councillor, in a raid in international waters off Greece.

Helene Coron, a spokeswoman for the Global Sumud France, told an online news conference that the operation had taken place near the Greek island of Crete, at an “unprecedented” distance from the Gaza coast.

Yasmine Scola, an activist on board the flotilla, said her colleagues had been “kidnapped” by Israel.

Israel’s foreign ministry had earlier put the number of those detained at 175.

Coron said those intercepted included Paris Communist local councillor Raphaëlle Primet and another 10 French nationals.

“We don’t have the information for the other nationalities, but the boats were mixed in terms of nationality, so there were crew members from all 48 delegations,” she said.

Rome, in a government statement, called for the immediate release of “all the unlawfully detained Italians”.

The organisers of the latest flotilla of pro-Palestinian activists seeking to break Israel’s blockade on Gaza announced early yesterday that their boats had been surrounded by Israeli military ships while off the coast of Crete.



The deployment of US troops in Europe is also in the US interest in support of its global role.

Anitta Hipper
EU spokeswoman

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তারিখঃ ১৭/০১/১৪৩৩ বঙ্গাব্দ
৩০/০৪/২০২৬ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ

This is to notify all concern that the following tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal.

Sl No.	Tender ID	Brief description of works	Publishing date & closing date time
1	1266481	Establishing 560 Mosque and Islamic Cultural Centers in Zila and Upazila of Bangladesh, S.H. Remaining work for Construction of 4-storied upazila Masjid Complex with 4- Storied Foundation at Plain Land for Islamic Foundation (Type-A) one at Jhalakathi Sadar in Jhalakathi District with Civil, Internal Sanitary and Internal Electrification	30-Apr-2026 15:30 14-May-2026-15:30

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and on offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Aman
৩০/০৪/২০২৬
Md. Aman Ullah Sarker
Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Jhalakathi
ee_jhlkt@pwd.gov.bd

GD-968



Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation
BSC Bhaban, Chattogram

Ref. No. 28.03.0000.000.045.01.0004.26

Dated: 30/04/2026

CORRIGENDUM NOTICE

This is to inform all concerned that the following correction has been made in the “Invitation for Enlistment” by this office Ref. No. 28.03.0000.000.045.01.0004.26; Dated 13-04-2026.

Description	As mentioned in Invitation notice and in Application Document	To be replaced as
1	2	3
Application Closing Date, Time	04 May 2026 04.00 PM (BST)	18 May 2026 04.00 PM (BST)

All other terms and conditions will remain unchanged. This corrigendum will form part of the Enlistment Document.

Mohammad Zahid Hossain
৩০/০৪/২৬
(Mohammad Zahid Hossain)
General Manager (Commercial & Operations)

GD-973

Is Boeing deal more about geopolitics?

It creates long-term financial obligations for Bangladesh

The decision to spend \$3.7 billion on American jetliners is partly a calculation of geopolitical intent. Under a deal with Boeing, Biman Bangladesh Airlines will buy 14 new aircraft—eight 787-10 Dreamliners, two 787-9s and four 737 MAX jets. It fulfils a commitment made by the interim government in February, when Dhaka and Washington signed a reciprocal trade agreement to address Bangladesh's \$7 billion surplus with the United States.

The politics behind all this is not difficult to read. The Trump administration, now in its second term, has been clear about its preference for reciprocal arrangements. As Washington began signalling tariff threats, Dhaka moved quickly to commit to buying American goods—and to make those commitments visible. Purchasing Boeing aircraft fit neatly into that logic and appeared to have resonated in Washington. Navigating a fragile transition, the interim government ultimately yielded to American pressure, leaving a large financial obligation for the next administration to inherit, just days before Bangladesh's national election.

The choice of Boeing over Airbus carries its own subtext. The Awami League government had announced plans to purchase ten Airbus jets, a move that would have deepened Biman's ties with European manufacturers and signalled strategic diversification. After the mass uprising of 2024, the interim government reversed course. Airbus argued, reasonably, that its aircraft would diversify Biman's all-Boeing fleet. Boeing, however, made the stronger case that it had influence in Washington. What stands out is not Boeing's victory over Airbus, but the circumstances in which the decision was made. The original trade agreement was presented as a diplomatic success, yet it was concluded without any scrutiny, at a time when no parliament was in place.

Geopolitical logic and commercial logic do not always align. Biman currently operates around 19 aircraft on international routes, well below the 30-35 it is believed to require. The government will provide a sovereign guarantee to underwrite the purchase, meaning that if Biman cannot service the debt, the state will. Payments are expected to extend over 20 years, costing between Tk 1,500 crore and Tk 2,000 crore annually.

To be fair, the timing is not entirely misplaced. The near completion of Dhaka airport's third terminal offers Biman an opportunity to expand capacity and position Dhaka as a regional hub. The wide-body Dreamliners, designed for long-haul efficiency, could strengthen services to Europe and the Gulf. Passenger demand is rising. A flag carrier that consistently under-invests in its fleet risks losing routes to competitors. The harder question is governance. Biman has not historically operated as an airline where aircraft are ordered solely based on network strategy, yield management or fuel economics. Political considerations have shaped its routes, staffing and procurement decisions. Unless there is a break from that pattern, Bangladesh will be left with an expensive fleet and a generation of debt.

Appeasing the US with a massive Boeing order, some believe, is a shrewd way to mitigate tariff risks. But the deal's real value will depend on the less visible work of running a better-managed airline. That is the more difficult commitment—and the one that ultimately matters most.

Stop the use of toxic chemicals in plastic

Govt must restrict high-risk additives in consumer products

While the debate on plastic largely focuses on visible waste and pollution, the invisible chemical hazards present in everyday plastic products have received far too little attention. Now, a new report by the Environment and Social Development Organisation (ESDO) has underscored the risks of exposure to two unregulated toxic chemicals—phthalates and bisphenols—in plastic products. Found in food containers, children's toys, school supplies, receipts, adhesives, and packaging materials, these substances can cause hormone disruption, reproductive disorders, developmental problems in children, and cancer. That such chemicals continue to be used freely in consumer goods should alarm both policymakers and the public.

Bangladesh produces more than three million tonnes of plastic annually, with the domestic market valued at over \$3 billion and growing rapidly. The industry is heavily reliant on imported raw materials and chemical additives, with around 15 shipments of bisphenol A (BPA) imported in 2025 alone. Unfortunately, chemical safety oversight has failed to keep pace with this expansion. An earlier ESDO study found phthalates in 30 out of 47 erasers used by schoolchildren. Another joint study found BPA in a majority of thermal paper receipts collected from retail outlets in Dhaka. Research in industrial areas such as Savar and Tongi detected significant concentrations of phthalates, posing ecological and carcinogenic risks. A separate study by ESDO and BAN Toxics found hazardous chemicals such as lead, mercury, cadmium, and chromium in many plastic toys sold in Dhaka markets, with some items containing levels far above accepted international safety limits.

However, existing laws do not adequately address hazardous additives, mandatory labelling remains absent, while consumers are largely unaware of what they are handling or bringing into their homes. Over the past decades, poor regulation, weak monitoring, and lax enforcement have allowed plastic pollution to persist across the country. Although polythene bags were banned in 2002, they remain widely used. Likewise, the High Court's directive to end the use of single-use plastic in hotels, motels, and restaurants in coastal areas has largely been ignored. Plastic pollution is choking our rivers, canals, and waterbodies, but existing regulations have done little to address the crisis due to a serious lack of political will.

This must change. We urge the government to take urgent policy action to protect people from the harmful impacts of plastic. It must regulate high-risk additives, introduce chemical-specific rules, and make labelling and disclosure mandatory. It must also set modern standards for plastic manufacturing, closely monitor imports of raw materials, and carry out regular product testing. Industries, too, must ensure that their growth does not come at the expense of public health and safety.



THE THIRD VIEW

Mahfuz Anam
is editor and publisher of *The Daily Star*.

MAHFUZ ANAM

A fact that we don't discuss much, and seem to have taken as a given, is the politicisation of our various professions. Over the years, this phenomenon has destroyed our ability to achieve professional excellence, substituting meritocracy with mediocrity, ability with obedience, ambition with lethargy, critical thinking with sycophancy, and the desire to build self-worth with a lack of sense of shame. We would rather genuflect than be genuine.

Most of our professional bodies are divided on partisan lines; as a result, professional standards are getting sidelined to promote partisan interests, which serves personal ambition—to occupy leadership positions or take advantage of opportunities—masquerading in the name of party loyalty. Our doctors, lawyers, engineers, journalists, and members of many other professions have openly allowed professionalism to take a second place to party interests, thereby lowering the standard of our respective professions. One of the key factors that have prevented our modernisation and progress is politicisation of public service bodies like the bureaucracy, administration, and law enforcement institutions, whose accountability has shifted from the people and transformed into loyalty to the ruling party of the day.

We start with the doctors because it is a profession that deals with our lives. The politicisation of doctors' representative bodies—set up with the backing of BNP and Awami League—started several decades ago. These bodies practically took over the health sector when their parties

Politicisation also afflicted bureaucracy and the law enforcement bodies in a deadly way. Being part of the government, they could not publicly take sides, but the undeclared affiliations were well-known and proven by the benefits that one group got as against the other. The cost of such affiliations in bureaucracy was clearly visible in terms of accountability and efficiency. The most significant impact was on nurturing merit.

came to power. They determined all the key government postings and new appointments and had a say in allocation of funds and major projects. How successful one is as a doctor does not matter; how powerful one is in these bodies determines everything. Can a health sector, whose basic ethos is public service, operate this way? Doesn't the sector's present-day ills—after 55 years of our independence—prove it? Obviously, every doctor has the right to have their political affiliation, and they may even participate in their respective party activities freely. But to allow politics and partisanship to dominate all relevant policies, priorities, decisions, and appointments is suicidal.

The politicisation and partisanship of teachers, especially those at the university level, have greatly damaged our higher education. The formation of various teachers' groups—white, blue, and pink panels, linked with BNP, Jamaat, Awami League, and the left, respectively—created serious division within the teachers' community, greatly affecting the academic atmosphere in most of our public universities. Important postings and granting of scholarships and research funds all followed party lines. Appointment of pro-VCs, proctors, hall provosts and even house tutors showed clear signs of favouritism. Scholarship disappeared as a condition of success

or recognition.

Partisan teachers' groups gradually linked up with students' parties of similar leanings, giving rise to a shameful teacher-student divide that crossed all lines of dignity and courtesy, with party lines becoming the only factor for success. Partisan students felt empowered to insult teachers in opposition groups, and sometimes would even assault them physically with behind-the-scenes encouragement from teachers of the same political line. One can easily imagine the near-total loss of academic



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

atmosphere in these universities and how muscle power gradually prevailed over freedom of thought, ideas and speech. Teachers devoted to academics were gradually sidelined and could only survive by remaining totally silent.

What perhaps caused the greatest damage to these academic institutions were the appointments of VCs that were determined on political considerations. Many of them were not even remotely qualified for such appointments. They formed their own groups of teachers and students and ran these academic institutions as personal fiefdoms, totally destroying their academic atmosphere. Sadly, VC appointments during the interim government era did not extricate themselves from this legacy.

Appointments of principals at well-known colleges across the country regrettably followed the same pattern. Those who got the posts because of their party affiliations were more beholden to the local MPs and student parties in running their institutions.

Most of our professional bodies are divided on partisan lines; as a result, professional standards are getting sidelined to promote partisan interests, which serves personal ambition—to occupy leadership positions or take advantage of opportunities—masquerading in the name of party loyalty. Our doctors, lawyers, engineers, journalists, and members of many other professions have openly allowed professionalism to take a second place to party interests, thereby lowering the standard of our respective professions.

In both these categories of academic institutions, merit and scholarship gradually disappeared, making students miserable victims of politicisation.

My own profession, journalism, is a victim of this politicisation as well. Like the doctors, journalists have also been divided along partisan lines. Maybe it started earlier, but from 1991 onwards, we could clearly see that whichever party would be in power, its journalist-affiliate bodies would dominate the professional bodies. They would receive all official support and foreign appointments (at press wings), and get official patronage. During the 15-plus years of rule by Sheikh Hasina, we could

hardly see any pro-BNP journalists at any official functions. Not even at the National Press Club, just as we don't see any pro-AL journalists there now.

The journalists who were part of this process did not seem to realise that having political affiliations revealed a bias that was antithetical to the values of neutrality and objectivity—the core values of this profession. This significantly reduced public trust in journalism, which journalists themselves did not seem to realise, or they ignored it knowingly. Today, hundreds of journalists from one side are accused of murder, without a shred of proof even after nearly 21 months, and journalists from the other side are not uttering a word. Okay, don't protest, but at least ask. Such is the political tilt.

Politicisation also afflicted bureaucracy and the law enforcement bodies in a deadly way. Being part of the government, they could not publicly take sides, but the undeclared

42 lawyers out of 90 candidates in the election scheduled for May 13-14, citing their affiliation with the Awami League whose political activities have been banned under the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2025. With one stroke, electoral rivals were totally removed. The SCBA should disclose under what provision of their own article of association did it take that action. The fact that the association has so far refused to make its formal resolution public raises questions about the attempt to hide something that the public deserves to know.

An organisation's activities may be banned, but an individual's rights cannot be taken away without due process. Not allowing 42 lawyers to participate in an election, for which they are legally and professionally qualified, means depriving them of their legal and constitutional rights. The lawyers whose nominations were cancelled did not submit their

applications as candidates of the Awami League; they reportedly did so in their individual capacity. Today, the SCBA is practically taking away their right to contest elections, and tomorrow, they may use the same law to deprive them of their right to practise. So, the decision by SCBA has serious implications and must be thoroughly examined.

What worries us is the fact that legally questionable actions are being taken by a body that is supposed to uphold the law at the highest level of the state—the Supreme Court. Lawyers practising at the apex court are expected to act as the highest representatives of the law and the legal system as a whole. They are considered officials of the law, an essential part of the justice delivery system. They are definitely the moral torchbearers of justice and upholders of its highest standards.

As an ordinary citizen, my understanding is that, along with the "letter of the law," there is the bigger horizon of the "spirit of the law." The SCBA must see the wider picture of the impact of its decision on society, democracy, personal rights, individual freedom, and the overall values of the legal system. To use it for the political benefit of the moment, and the personal benefit of some, is to play with the law, justice system, the image of the apex court, and public trust. This is not only dangerous but extremely damaging for the reputation of the present government whose head, the prime minister, has strongly declared that he is against such a phenomenon. It lowers public faith in the law and in our constitution. We should never let that happen—definitely not by lawyers who are members of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

I conclude by repeating the initial question about how politicisation of our professions has held Bangladesh back. Take a look at the world and realise where every profession has gone, is going, and where they are headed. Do we have any chance of competing without transforming ourselves? The place to begin is to restore professionalism in every profession and institution in our country.

MAY DAY

Capital, precarious labour, and the changing face of our working class



Anu Muhammad
is former professor of economics
at Jahangirnagar University.

ANU MUHAMMAD

The emergence and development of the wage labourer is deeply linked to the emergence and development of capitalism. The existence and expansion of capitalism are impossible without the growth of the wage-earning class. Therefore, during the industrial revolution in Europe, while the capitalists established dominance, the working class was simultaneously formed. The picture was much the same in the United States. As working hours and wages were not fixed, numerous protests and demonstrations broke out, and organisations were formed to change the unspeakable living conditions of workers, including women and children. Following the labour movements of the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s, a massive rally in Chicago was attacked on May 1, 1886, during a strike involving over 300,000 workers. Workers were killed in the firing, and later, labour organisers were hanged following a farcical trial. This sacrifice did not go in vain. The demands that were once labelled as terrorism and counter-development were eventually accepted by the whole world, and May Day became known worldwide.

One of the major changes in Bangladesh's society and economy over the last few decades is the shift in the composition of the working class. In the name of economic reforms, many state-owned enterprises have been declared closed since the 1980s. Adamjee Jute Mills was closed in 2002, and all remaining jute and sugar mills followed. Until the 80s, the state-owned sector's workers were primarily the organised segment of the country's industrial workforce. The closing of state-owned factories, regardless of the government in power, was not merely a process of privatising state assets; it was simultaneously part of a long-term project to break the organised strength of industrial workers.

The garment industry now dominates as an export-oriented sector and employs the highest number of industrial workers. Despite the significant attention this sector enjoys, the number of unions is negligible, and the state of other workers' organisations is weak.

Thousands of predatory billionaires have emerged during Bangladesh's economic reform in the last few decades. Various state institutions actively protect them. Rather than continuing and developing productive processes, their primary task is the rapid concentration of wealth through hyper-

exploitation, occupation, plunder, and money laundering, and to ensure this by crushing the democratic rights of the public, especially the working people. The politics and economy of Bangladesh are primarily under their control. For this reason, the largest portion of the population—workers—are deprived of their minimum democratic rights. In most industrial factories, the minimum living wage, eight-hour workday, appointment letters, weekly holidays, and safety at work and working environment are either entirely or mostly absent. Establishing trade unions remains a struggle against continuous oppression and deception.

Incidents of arrests, attacks, and harassment for working on trade union rights occur frequently. Among those that exist, "pocket unions" are predominant.

With the development of the garment industry, there has been a significant gender shift in the composition of the working class. The majority of workers in this sector are women. Beyond this, women's participation has increased in various other professions. We hear many stories of women's empowerment. But the news of insecurity, murder, rape, and harassment of these working women that appears in daily newspapers reflects only a fraction of the reality. In facing continuous deprivation and oppression, women workers have turned into a new, protestive social force.

Driven by the evolving demands and structural shifts of modern capital, precarious employment—including temporary, daily, part-time, and informal work—is surging across nearly every sector. Workers in the informal sector are completely unorganised, and their lives are a struggle for survival amidst extreme uncertainty. The number of online workers is also rising rapidly, and

their uncertainty is even greater. These include riders, people in food delivery, and outsourcing work, known as gig workers. The core demand of May Day—eight hours of work with a wage sufficient for a decent living—remains far out of reach for workers across all sectors in Bangladesh, including labourers, the toiling masses, and even these educated, online-based earners.

The opportunity to organise is also very slim for educated working people. Consequently, even banks, insurance, media, NGOs, private schools, colleges, universities, clinics, or the online sectors lack work or income security. There is little institutional mechanism for redress against the arbitrary dismissal or injustice faced by people working in these places. The relevant authorities often appear as silent spectators. There are few systems as ineffective as Bangladesh's legal and institutional monitoring systems when it comes to protecting the interests of the majority.

While the majority of people live in poverty and deprivation, Bangladesh's GDP and average per capita income have increased manifold without any significant

improvement in their lives. The cruelty remains hidden behind statistical deceit. The high rate of growth is built on the blood and sweat of farmers, garment workers, and migrant workers. On the other hand, the cost of education and healthcare has increased due to commercialisation. Transport costs and house rents have risen. In the last few years, most people have faced hardship in work and income, resulting in increased unemployment and poverty. To finance massive infrastructure projects and sustain an import-heavy economy, the government continually raises taxes, fees, and utility prices. At the same time, runaway inflation on essential goods is steadily shrinking the real income of the average citizen. By ruining the livelihoods of the people and destroying the river systems, life, nature, and environment of Bangladesh, the GDP has increased, but permanent, stable, and environment-friendly decent work opportunities have not.

In the capitalist world, the message of May Day repeatedly arises in the struggle for the existence of the majority. May Day highlights the challenges workers face in organising politically to combat exploitation. Bangladesh serves as a stark reminder of how deeply the working class suffers when this organised resistance is weak. The structural killing of workers in the 2013 Rana Plaza tragedy laid bare these weaknesses. Even after such a disaster, the state of safety, wages, and the right to organise in the country reflects the same fragility. Because of this weakness, factories repeatedly turn into mass graves as a result of the limitless greed of local looter billionaires and international profiteers and their political influence. In recent years, preventable disasters in places like Rugganj, Sitakunda, and Old Dhaka have claimed the lives of well over a hundred labourers. Working-class people continually remain the primary victims of these deadly fires, building collapses, and chemical explosions. Construction workers are regularly killed or injured at their workplaces. In recent years, many working people lost everything in fires in various places, including the Korail slum, Bangabazar, and New Market. There are reasonable grounds to believe that many such fire incidents are part of the development projects of certain groups.

Driven by capitalism, the number of wage earners is growing globally and expanding across all social classes. How capitalism operates today cannot be truly understood if only factory workers are pictured. Technology has transformed the workforce, forcing many degree-holders into jobs that seem middle-class but are actually highly precarious. Because of this, the solidarity of May Day speaks to 99 percent of the population. The global rallying cry of "We are the 99%" is simply the modern-day continuation of the May Day legacy.

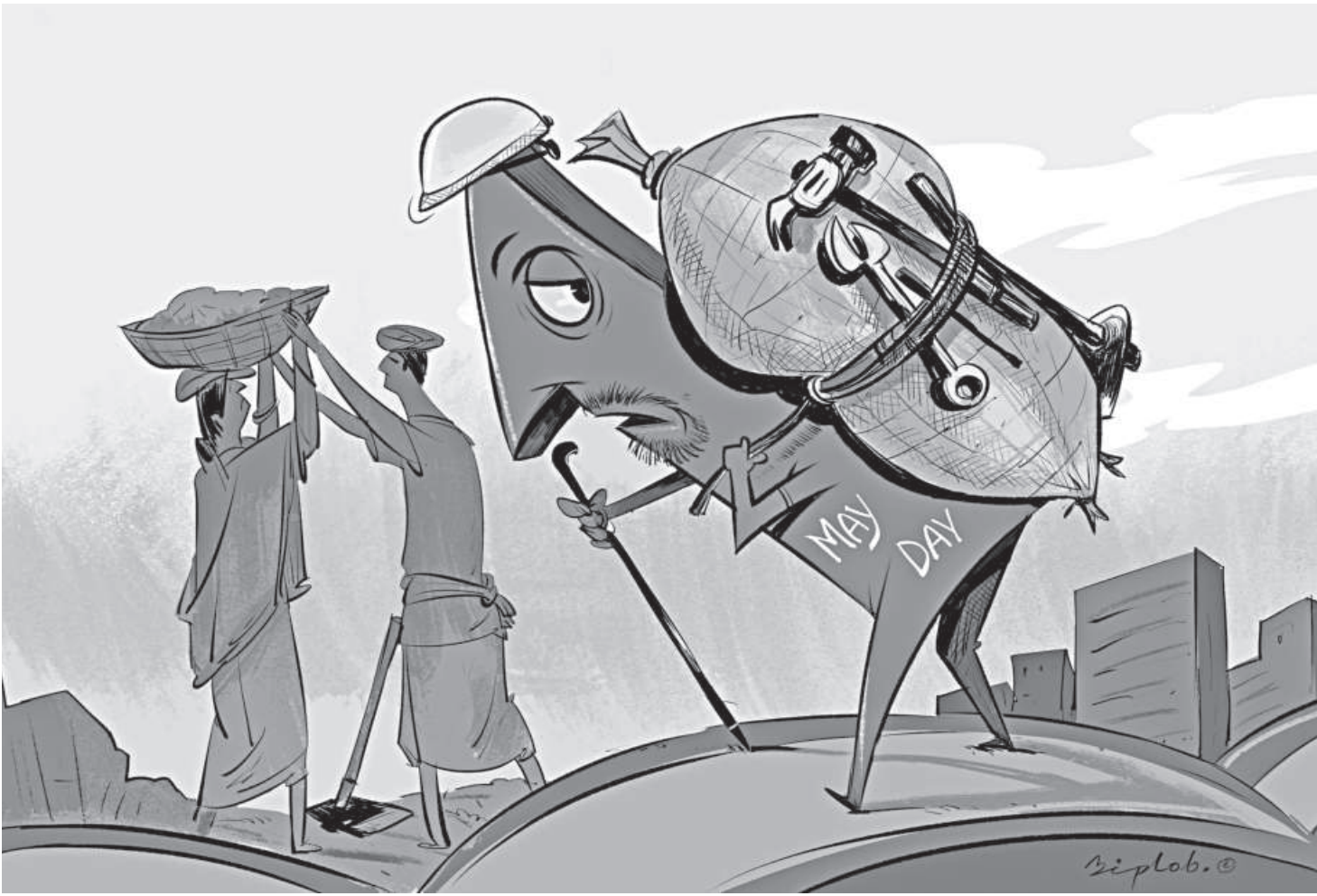


ILLUSTRATION: BIPLOB CHAKRABORTY

The unfinished promise of decent work



Kalpona Akter
is executive director at Bangladesh Center for
Workers Solidarity (BCWS).

KALPONA AKTER

May Day today is not just a commemoration. It is a checkpoint. It forces us to ask whether the country's economic growth has translated into dignity for the common people, whether labour laws have become lived realities, and whether workers—especially women—are any closer to justice. Bangladesh stands as one of the world's largest garment exporters, powered by over four million workers, the majority of them women. However, behind this rosy picture lies a complex reality where progress is constrained by resistance to change as well as deep inequalities.

Over the past decade or so, Bangladesh has taken some important steps in labour governance. The legacy of the Rana Plaza collapse remains a defining moment, one that forced both national and global actors to confront the consequences of weak regulation. Since then, there have been notable improvements in factory inspections, building safety, and compliance frameworks, due in large part to private initiatives like the Accord that pushed for meaningful changes. More recently, Bangladesh under the interim government made a landmark move by ratifying three key International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions: Convention 155 on Occupational Safety and Health, Convention 187 on Promotional Framework for OSH, and Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment. These ratifications position the country as a regional leader in formal commitments to international labour standards.

At the national level, ongoing labour law reforms and the work of the interim-

era Labour Reform Commission have added momentum to discussions around decent work. The commission emphasised strengthening labour inspection, expanding worker protections—including for domestic workers—and improving access to justice and social protection systems. These developments have created a framework for future progress, but frameworks alone do not change lives.

If there is one issue that has persistently defined the gap between our reality and expectations, it is wages. The current minimum wage for entry-level workers in the readymade garment (RMG) sector stands at Tk 12,500 per month. Set in 2023, this was an increase from the previous minimum of Tk 8,000, but it remains far below what workers need to sustain a basic standard of living. Trade unions and labour rights groups have repeatedly called for a minimum wage in the range of Tk 23,000 to 25,000, based on basic cost-of-living calculations. The gap between the current and expected figures reflects, among other things, the imbalance of power in the wage-setting processes.

Inflation further complicates this reality. In recent years, inflation in Bangladesh has hovered around 10-11 percent, eroding the real value of wages. Even with some recent easing in inflation as well as annual wage increments of around 9 percent, many workers find that their purchasing power has stagnated or declined. For many, survival still depends on overtime, debt, or cutting essential expenses. This raises a fundamental question: can an economy be considered successful if its workers remain trapped in a

cycle of low wages?

Labour rights are not only about wages, however. They are also about voice. The labour law recognises the right to form trade unions, and recent reforms have attempted to ease some restrictions. However, in practice, challenges remain. Workers continue to report barriers to union registration, and cases of intimidation and retaliation are not uncommon. Without effective freedom of association, labour reforms risk becoming procedural rather than transformative.

Workers, therefore, must be able to negotiate collectively, raise grievances, and participate meaningfully in shaping their working conditions. The ILO has

Labour rights are not just about wages, but also about voice. The labour law recognises the right to form trade unions, and recent reforms have attempted to ease some restrictions. However, in practice, challenges remain. Workers continue to report barriers to union registration, and cases of intimidation and retaliation are not uncommon. Without effective freedom of association, labour reforms risk becoming procedural rather than transformative.

repeatedly emphasised the importance of social dialogue in wage-setting and labour governance practices. Without this, policies risk being disconnected from reality. There is no effective substitute for genuine social dialogue and collective bargaining through trade unions.

We should also talk about workplace safety, which has improved since Rana Plaza, but risks persist. Reports indicate that hundreds of workers still lose their lives each year

due to workplace accidents across various sectors. This highlights that compliance systems exist but enforcement remains inconsistent. Against this backdrop, ratifying all 11 ILO fundamental instruments as the first Asian country to do so is an important step, but as labour advocates often remind us, ratification does not automatically lead to protection. Implementation—through sustained inspections, accountability, and worker participation—is what ultimately matters.

Beyond the RMG and other industrial sectors, the majority of Bangladesh's workforce operates in the informal economy. Domestic workers, construction labourers, transport workers, and agricultural workers often lack written contracts, social protection, and access to legal remedies. The Labour Reform Commission acknowledged the need to extend protections to these workers, but translating this into an enforceable policy remains a major challenge. A labour system that protects only the formal sector, leaving millions behind, is not inclusive, and we must strive to change this reality.

Another emerging reality is the intersection of labour and climate. Bangladesh is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. Heatwaves, floods, and other extreme weather events are already affecting people's productivity, health, and livelihoods. Workers in factories and informal sectors are increasingly exposed to dangerous conditions. Despite that, climate resilience has not been fully integrated into labour policies. Basic protections such as rest breaks, access to water, and safe working conditions during extreme heat are not consistently enforced. The future of work in Bangladesh will be shaped by how well our policymakers respond to the challenges of climate change, automation, and economic transitions.

Let's get back to women workers, who remain at the centre of Bangladesh's economic success but continue to face structural inequalities. The ratification of ILO Convention 190 is a significant milestone in addressing workplace violence

and harassment, but implementation, again, has been a key challenge. Gender-based discrimination, unequal pay, and limited leadership opportunities persist. Ensuring gender justice requires more than legal provisions; it requires institutional commitment, workplace accountability, and cultural change.

So, what is the way forward for us? Bangladesh does not need to start from scratch. The foundations—laws, institutions, and international commitments—are already in place. What is needed is delivery.

First, the wage-setting exercise must accommodate a living wage framework that reflects real costs of living. This will require not only national policy changes but also responsible purchasing practices from global brands. Second, freedom of association must be ensured on the ground; simplifying union registration and protecting worker leaders are critical steps. Third, labour protections must extend to all informal workers, supported by social protection systems and legal recognition.

Fourth, climate resilience must be integrated into labour policies, ensuring that workers are protected from emerging risks. Fifth, creating safe and women-friendly workplaces must be a priority. Women workers must be able to work free from harassment, discrimination, and insecurity. This requires effective implementation of protections against violence and harassment, equal pay, access to functional grievance mechanisms, and real opportunities for leadership and advancement. Finally, proper enforcement of all policies and conventions must be a top priority. Without implementation, even the strongest laws remain symbolic.

Over the years, Bangladesh's workers have built industries, sustained families, and contributed to global supply chains. Their role in the country's economic success is undeniable. The question is whether that success will translate into lasting gains. May Day reminds us that labour rights cannot be static; they must be continuously fought for, negotiated, and realised over time.

This honour belongs to the people: Runa Laila

Legendary singer wins ‘Minar-E-Dilli’ Award

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Legendary singer Runa Laila, one of the subcontinent’s most celebrated voices, continues to command admiration across generations. With a career that has taken Bangla music to international audiences, she remains an enduring cultural figure for Bangladesh.

The artiste has announced two new developments in her career. A new song, titled *Anayash*, is set for release on May 16, accompanied by a music video. In addition, she is to be honoured at the Delhi International Film Festival with the Minar-E-Dilli award.

The festival will open on May 4 at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Ambedkar International Centre in Delhi, concluding on May 8, where the award will be presented.

Reflecting on the recognition, Runa Laila said, “I feel this is not only an honour for me, but a great honour for the country as well. I am proud to receive this as a Bangladeshi artiste.” She also expressed gratitude to the organisers and said she was informed of the honour through a letter from festival chairman Ram Kishore.

Speaking about her upcoming release, the singer noted that the song was initially planned as a solo, but later evolved into a duet with Bappa Mazumder. “At first, Bappa was hesitant and asked if he could sing with me,” she said, adding that she encouraged him, leading to the collaboration.

Describing the track, she said it carries a fresh musical tone with elements of ghazal. “This is the first time I have sung something in this style. The composition and lyrics have come together beautifully,” she said. The song has been written by Galib Hasan, with composition and music direction by Bappa Mazumder.

Runa Laila also reflected on her continued engagement with music. “It is by the grace of the Almighty that I am still able to sing,” she said, expressing her desire to continue performing for as long as possible.

Recently, she performed in Sylhet, where she sang on stage for nearly an hour and a half. “It was a fulfilling experience. Being able to perform like this is also a blessing,” she added.



PHOTO: STAR



Meril-Prothom Alo awards to air today on Maasranga TV

The 27th Meril-Prothom Alo Awards 2025 was held on April 24 at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka. The grand award ceremony will be broadcast today at 8:20 pm on Maasranga Television.

Ahead of the main event, the red carpet segment will be aired separately today at 6:35 pm. The segment was hosted by Rumman Rashid Khan and Mousumi Mou. It features the stars’ stylish appearances, candid reactions, excitement, and light-hearted moments.

The ceremony officially opened with a welcome speech from Anisul Hoque, managing editor of Prothom Alo, followed by remarks from Malik Mohammed Sayeed, CEO of Square Toiletries Ltd, the event’s long-standing partner.

MAY DAY SPECIAL

When music remembers the worker

DOWEL BISWAS

“Do engines get rewarded for their steam?”

The line travels from 19th-century ballads of the steel-driving man, later crystallised in Johnny Cash’s *The Legend of John Henry’s Hammer* from *Blood, Sweat and Tears*. It is not merely lyric memory, rather it is an unsettled question that keeps returning to labour itself: what is a human body worth when only output is measured, and endurance is taken for granted?

“With a machine, we maintain output through rest, repair, and controlled limits. With people, the demand only expands until they are reduced to the work,” said Tanim Ahmed, a journalist. The logic is not theoretical. It is structural, lived, and repeated.

In Bangladesh, labour history is often narrated as chronology—laws, uprisings, collapses, reforms. From the 1881 Factories Act to Swadeshi in 1905, through 1971 and beyond, the working class appears in political history. But rarely does it appear as a cultural system that sustains its own memory.

Yet, expectations rarely remain intact. What survives instead are fragments of what once carried belief. Among those fragments, songs persist in ways institutions do not.

There is a visible gap here—between labour songs as archive and labour songs as lived recognition. The elite imagination often keeps labour at distance, even when it acknowledges its existence. The worker is seen, but not sustained in sound. The songs that were meant to bridge that distance do not always complete the journey. This absence matters because these songs were never only expression. They were translation systems—turning labour into something repeatable, socially legible,

and emotionally transferable.

“I have a personal distance from many of these older labour songs nowadays. Whereas we used to celebrate May Day in our locality in childhood. I can recall the idea of them more than their presence. The emotional recognition does not fully activate through them in the way it perhaps should,” said journalist Bishwajit Roy. The admission is not about forgetting alone. It is about uneven transmission—how cultural memory weakens when it is no longer collectively rehearsed.

And yet, labour songs continue to exist, but in compressed form.

These songs were not designed to remain static texts. They were meant to circulate—through unions, gatherings, repetition, oral transmission. That system has weakened. What remains is compression.

A full composition becomes a line. A line becomes a reference. A reference becomes a vague recognition that may or may not reconnect to origin. This is not disappearance. It is survival under pressure.

Songs like *Gahi Shammer Gaan* still carry the idea of equality, even when detached from performance. *Aj May Din, Happy May Day*, and *Rokto Bheja May Tomay Salam* shift increasingly toward commemoration rather than mobilisation. The tone changes from instruction to memory, from movement to remembrance.

Renowned singer and political activist Farzana Wahid Shayan complicates this inherited archive. She states that even these historically iconic songs no longer fully articulate the present condition of labour. For her, the language feels distanced from the

immediacy of workers’ lives.

Her new song, *Shunechi Tader Mojuri Ekhono Daoni*, attempts a more direct register—less metaphor, more address, where wage becomes absence and consumption becomes contrast.

But the deeper tension is not stylistic. It is structural.

“I couldn’t really connect with existing songs in a personal way. Not because they don’t exist, but because the relationship between labour, struggle, and representation feels divided. Especially in elite perception, workers are observed from a distance rather than understood through lived emotional language,” said Shayan.

Across this tension, labour songs function less like fixed memory and more like a system under constant strain. They store ideology in compressed form. They survive partial recall. They reappear in fragments during rupture—factory fires, wage disputes, industrial collapse—without requiring full reconstruction.

And this return behaves almost as if the songs themselves understand what they have to do—to stay alive in whatever reduced form is possible. They carry the memory of labour even when the workers themselves are not consciously holding it at that moment. They acknowledge peril, exhaustion, collapse, even when it is no longer fully spoken. They keep playing through fracture, through silence, through forgetting.

Like John Henry’s hammer, they do not stop at recognition. They continue as if endurance itself is their logic. Self-aware in rhythm, persistent in repetition, they press against the physical world that tries to exhaust them out of existence. They do not merely describe labour—they enact its refusal to disappear.

So, the question is no longer whether labour songs represent workers.

It is whether they are still working—carrying memory forward, absorbing loss, and surviving the systems that try to outlast them.



VISUAL: DOWEL BISWAS



RELEASING ON MAY 07

Gias Uddin Selim’s ‘Pother Pechal’ to premiere on Chorki

Director Gias Uddin Selim is set to release his new flash fiction *Pother Pechal* on Chorki. The production premieres at 12 am on May 7, exclusively on the platform.

The cast includes Yash Rohan, Bonne Hasan, Monir Hasan Khan Shimul, Ashok Bepari, Pronab Ghosh, and Sanjida Yasmin Snigdha. The poster was released on Chorki’s verified Facebook page on April 29.

The story follows Bayezid, an auto-rickshaw driver whose life revolves around his daily work. His life changes when Uma enters

unexpectedly. Uma is a young novelist trying to publish her first book. The story develops through their interaction and conversations, as two people from very different social backgrounds come together.

The screenplay and dialogues are written by Selim, based on a story by Shipra Debnath. The project is jointly produced by Alpha-i and Chorki.

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

Agency, identity, and the rewriting of Medusa

Review of ‘I, Medusa’ (Random House, 2025) by Ayana Gray

JONAH KENT RICHARDS

One of the most interesting adaptations that I have read recently is the 2025 novel *I, Medusa* by African American novelist Ayana Gray. According to Greek mythology, Medusa was a priestess of the goddess Athena who was raped by the sea god Poseidon and transformed into a gorgon by the goddess as a punishment for losing her chastity. Medusa was later beheaded in her sleep by the mortal hero Perseus. In her novel, Gray tells Medusa’s origin story. Gray not only reimagines Medusa as a Black woman, but she turns the character from antagonist to the heroine of her own story. In a story about a snake-haired woman whose gaze turns men into stone, Gray asks, is it really the gorgon who is the monster or rather the god and goddess who transformed her into one?

While Gray’s novel preserves the characters and plot of the original Medusa myths, she chooses to portray Medusa and her family as resembling people of African descent. It is a fascinating choice because Gray explicitly states that Medusa is still the mortal daughter

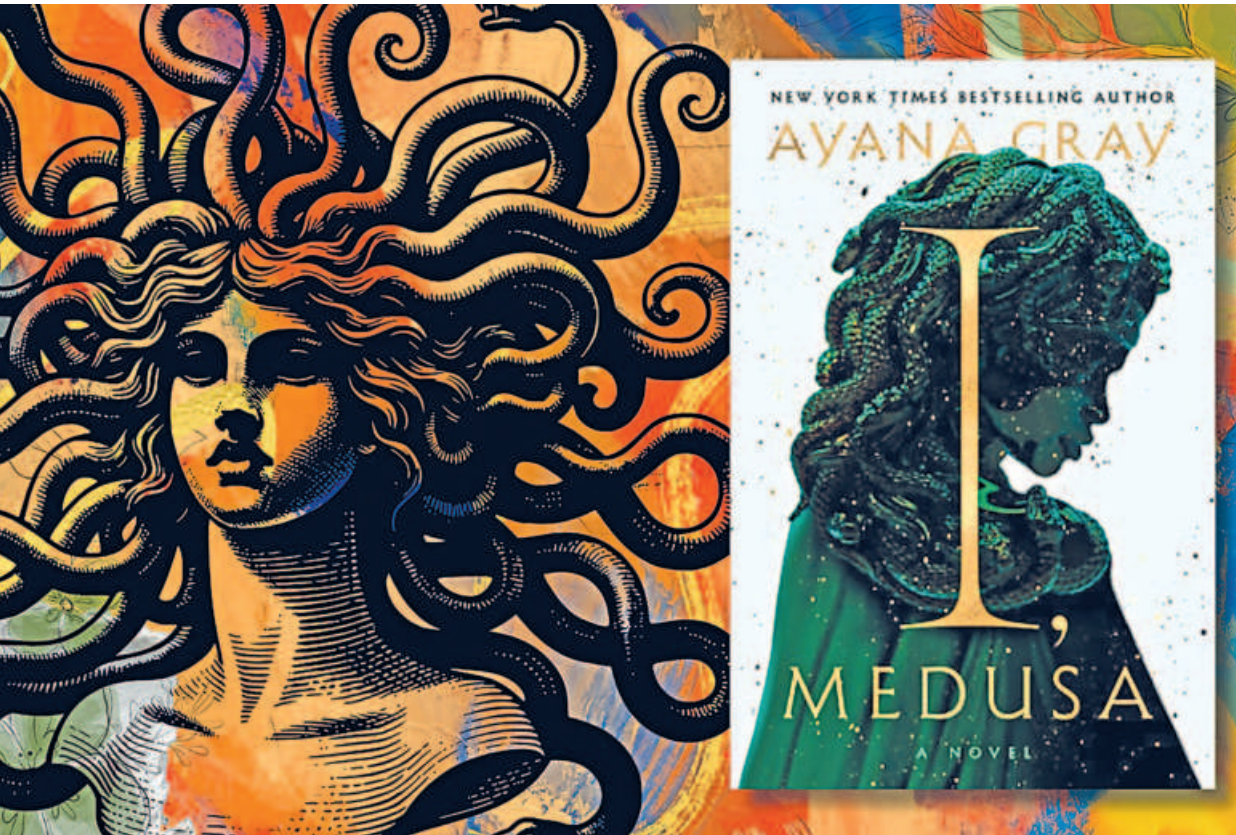


ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

Gray’s novel represents a powerful retelling of the Medusa that not only reimagines her as a woman of colour, but also as the tragic heroine of her own story. I imagine that some of those readers who avoid Greco-Roman mythology because they can’t see themselves in the stories or because they dislike the problematic portrayal of many of the women might very well be drawn to Gray’s adaptation.

of the sea gods Phorcys and Ceto, but they all share the same brown skin and Afro-textured hair. Gray places particular emphasis on Medusa’s locs (dreadlocks). Medusa describes her locs as her “pride” and her “dearest physical possessions”. For Medusa and her sisters, Stheno and Euryale, the act of braiding and washing each other’s locs were cherished family bonding moments. During Medusa’s initiation to become one of Athena’s

priestesses, Medusa presents her hair braiding as her craft. Gray’s portrayal of Medusa’s love of her locs can be read as a celebration of the hairstyle as a centuries-old African symbol of beauty and cultural tradition.

It is not a coincidence that when Athena declares that Medusa has used her beauty for blasphemy and wickedness—and that she will have beauty no longer—the goddess chooses to target her hair. In a transformation scene reminiscent of a Hollywood horror movie, Medusa falls to the floor in pain as her locs fall out and are replaced by long black snakes. Medusa describes how “[t]hey writhe against one another, tangling like so many grotesque locs”. When Medusa’s best friend Theo tries to help her, she accidentally turns him into stone with her gaze. In one powerful move, Athena took the physical feature that Medusa believed to be her most beautiful and turned it into something monstrous. Indeed, Medusa says that Athena has

turned her into a monster.

However, Gray makes it clear that despite Medusa’s new appearance, it is Poseidon and Athena who are the monsters. After being transformed into gorgons themselves for condemning Athena’s actions against their sister, Stheno and Euryale ask Medusa about what happened between her and Poseidon, and they reassure her that she did nothing wrong. They remind Medusa that Poseidon was thousands of years older than her and he was able to use his position as king of the sea court, as well as the fact that Medusa was drunk with Olympian wine, to manipulate her. The sisters remind her that even though Medusa initially welcomed Poseidon’s advances, she had the right to change her mind at any point.

It is this support from her sisters that allows Medusa to recover her sense of agency and self worth. Stheno reminds Medusa that her body belongs to herself and that she will learn to

control her new powers. However, Stheno warns Medusa that her snake-locs, and the rest of the world, won’t respect her unless she makes them. Inspired by her sister, Medusa pulls out one of her snake-locs, killing it in the process. The action subdues the rest of the snake-locs into submitting themselves to her will. Once Medusa has regained control of her snake-locs, she comes to accept them and even sees the beauty in them. Gray makes it quite clear that Medusa isn’t a victim, but a survivor.

Medusa’s journey comes to a head with her reunion with Athena. Despite the goddess’s anger, Athena can’t help but express her admiration over how strong, powerful, and feared Medusa has become since her transformation. Athena even offers Medusa a chance to return to her service as her enforcer against injustice. While a small part of Medusa is tempted by the offer, she realises that the offer would come at the cost of her newly gained

freedom. She understands that the goddess had cursed her not out of sense that Medusa had betrayed her, or that Poseidon had violated her, but because Athena had believed Medusa had belonged to her and that Poseidon had used her “tool” without her permission. Medusa refuses to ever let Athena or anyone else use her again. As a young girl, Medusa’s mother Ceto once told her that the worst monsters didn’t bother hiding themselves in the dark. By the end of the scene, Gray shows that the true monster of the story wasn’t the mortal girl turned into a gorgon, but the goddess who tried to possess that mortal girl and then cursed her out of jealous rage when another god tried to exploit her as well.

If I had to critique anything about the novel, it would be that I wanted to learn more about Medusa’s mother Ceto. The sea goddess is a complex and tragic character in her own right. Once a powerful sea goddess, she was forced to submit to the Olympians and is trapped in an abusive marriage with Phorcys. She self-medicates her depression with alcohol and she sometimes physically abuses her daughters Stheno and Euryale. But in her own way, she loves Medusa and tries to protect her daughter from Athena against whom she holds a long bloody grudge. Despite their complicated relationship, Medusa sees herself in her mother. I would have loved for the mother and daughter to develop more fully. If not for them to reconcile then at least for them to get a chance to better understand each other.

I strongly recommend *I, Medusa*. Gray’s novel represents a powerful retelling of the Medusa that not only reimagines her as a woman of colour, but also as the tragic heroine of her own story. I imagine that some of those readers who avoid Greco-Roman mythology because they can’t see themselves in the stories or because they dislike the problematic portrayal of many of the women might very well be drawn to Gray’s adaptation.

Jonah Kent Richards is a Shakespeare screen adaptation scholar, an English teacher, and contributor for Star Books and Literature.

BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

Fara Dabhoiwala’s history misses the one thing that truly matters

Review of ‘What Is Free Speech?: The History of a Dangerous Idea’ (Belknap Press, 2025) by Fara Dabhoiwala

NAJMUSSAKIB

That censorship is not only malign but also stupid and, in the long run, futile, is a lesson that every tinpot dictator and overzealous bureaucrat has to learn afresh. But the opposite assumption, that the absence of censorship automatically creates a healthy marketplace of ideas, Fara Dabhoiwala says, is also an insidious illusion. His new history of free speech, *What Is Free Speech?: The History of a Dangerous Idea*, argues that free speech is not a natural state of being but a deeply artificial concept, shaped from its inception by imbalances of power, including the silencing of women to the brutalities of empire. Dabhoiwala posits that to celebrate liberty of expression without asking whose liberty and at whose expense is to engage in a form of willful historical amnesia.

To make this case, Dabhoiwala embarks on a panoramic, if occasionally anachronistic, sweep of the last half-millennium, a narrative journey that begins by reminding the reader of the elemental, almost magical, power ascribed to speech in ‘pre-Enlightenment’ societies, where a blasphemy or a slander was not merely an offense but a tangible disruption of the cosmic and social order. He then details how this holistic worldview was chipped away, first by the grudging necessities of religious toleration, and then shattered by the invention of political free speech in 18th-century England, a doctrine he argues was less a philosophical breakthrough than a journalistic racket, born of stock-market panic and partisan fury, whose inherently racialized and gendered conception of liberty was then exported, with all its hypocrisies intact, to the slave-holding colonies of America.

The book’s central, unstated syllogism seems to be this: the origin of free speech

is tainted by hypocrisy, greed, and power; therefore, the ideal of free speech is itself a tainted instrument. One might as well argue that because the American Constitution was drafted by slaveholders, its (belated) guarantees of equality are worthless. What Dabhoiwala misses, in his anger about the slave trade and the British Empire, is the simple, double-edged fact that a principle can transcend its flawed creators. For those of us living in the post-colonial world, the fact that Mill, the bureaucrat, was a hypocrite is beside the point regarding free expression; what matters is that *On Liberty*, the text, provided the language our own anti-colonial forebears used to demand rights of free expression.

Dabhoiwala’s most glaring failure is his inability to grapple with the real ‘danger’ in the book’s subtitle. It is true that he mentions many instances of violence wrought upon individuals for their expression, but his tone is more urgent and sincere when he frets about the social harm of ridiculing holiest beliefs, a

In a post-colonial nation like ours, this is a central mechanism of state control. When the state invokes ‘communal harmony’ to silence reporting on minority rights, or ‘national security’ to jail cartoonists, or ‘wounding religious sentiments’ to crush dissent, it is using the same logic of “harm prevention” that Dabhoiwala champions.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

fine-sounding phrase that, in the real world, translates directly into a justification for blasphemy laws, the legal architecture of theocratic thuggery. Salman Rushdie makes a cameo appearance in Dabhoiwala’s long, rambling, only to be dismissed as a free speech absolutist. The 30-year campaign of extremist violence which nearly succeeded in murdering him while this book was being written, is not even mentioned. A fine history of free speech, indeed!

Ironically, for a book that so strenuously critiques Anglo-American exceptionalism, Dabhoiwala’s narrative is hopelessly Anglo-centric, advertised as a “remarkable global history”, yet culminating in a final, furious charge against the modern American First Amendment. The inclusion of a valuable chapter on British India and a perfunctory detour through Scandinavia does not make a

history global. By focusing his ultimate concern so intently on how the American ideal protects “Nazis, antisemites, (and) racists,” Dabhoiwala frames the central problem of free speech as one of excessive private license. This focus entirely ignores that in most of the world, including here in Bangladesh, the primary threat to expression comes from the coercive power of the state.

More dangerously, Dabhoiwala’s thesis validates the language of the oppressors. His reasonable-sounding insistence on regulating speech to “prevent harm,” treating it as an “action like any other,” provides the precise justification for repressive legal architectures, from the colonial-era sedition laws he details to contemporary DSA and now Cyber Security Act in our country. He exposes how past limitations were arbitrarily drawn to silence women, slaves, and colonial

subjects. Yet he fails to see the flaw in his own prescription, simply assuming his preferred regulations against ‘hate speech’ or ‘group libel’ are the logical and correct ones.

This merely substitutes one set of arbitrary boundaries for another, and more importantly, it begs the crucial question: who, precisely, gets to decide what constitutes harm? In a post-colonial nation like ours, this is a central mechanism of state control. When the state invokes ‘communal harmony’ to silence reporting on minority rights, or ‘national security’ to jail cartoonists, or ‘wounding religious sentiments’ to crush dissent, it is using the same logic of “harm prevention” that Dabhoiwala champions. Giving this power to the state is not the solution; it is, and always has been, the core of the problem.

Ultimately, Dabhoiwala’s book is a treatise that, while meticulously documenting the hypocrisies of the past, offers aid and comfort to the tyrants of the present. By elevating the subjective claim of harm over the necessity of liberty, he provides a high-minded alibi for the censor’s pen and the state’s baton. This is the oldest argument in the book of tyranny, the very same one used against Socrates, who was, after all, judicially murdered for harming the youth and offending the gods.

The distinction between word and deed that Dabhoiwala finds so flimsy is, in fact, the load-bearing wall of an open society. The right to free speech is the right to tell people what they do not want to hear. Dabhoiwala, in his anxiety over the content of the speech, seems to have forgotten the one thing that truly matters: the inalienable right to have it, free from the arbitrary and silencing verdict of “who decides”.

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Biman signs \$3.7b deal with Boeing

FROM PAGE 1

for the purchase, while the government will provide a sovereign guarantee.

“The new fuel-efficient, technologically advanced aircraft will modernise Biman’s fleet, sharpen operational performance, and extend its international route network -- strengthening Bangladesh’s position in the global aviation market.”

Biman’s board chairman, Rumee A Hossain, said, “The new aircraft will raise daily seat capacity to more than 5,000 and enhance cargo handling capability.”

Paul Righi, vice president of Boeing Company, said Biman has become one of the few carriers worldwide to operate the full family of 787 Dreamliners – the 787-8, 787-9 and 787-10.

He noted that the 787-10 will deliver unmatched efficiency and increased capacity on high-demand routes, including the Middle East, while the 787-9 will serve long-haul routes to Europe and North America.

US Ambassador Brent T Christensen said, “We’re proud this purchase is being financed by the Export-Import Bank of the United States, with terms that will reduce the burden on Biman’s cash flows that align with aircraft delivery schedules.”

This marks Biman’s first aircraft purchase agreement in 18 years, aimed at modernising its fleet, boosting long-haul capacity, opening new international routes and strengthening regional operations.

After becoming a public limited company in 2007, Biman inked a deal with Boeing for 10 new planes in 2008. Two more were later added, bringing the total to 12 aircraft at a cost of around Tk 19,020 crore.

Biman’s current fleet is dominated by Boeing aircraft, with 14 of its 19 planes from Boeing. The remaining five are Dash 8 aircraft manufactured by De Havilland Canada.

The deal to purchase Boeing aircraft was part of the interim government’s strategy to reduce Bangladesh’s trade gap with the US and secure tariff relief.

During negotiations over the 37 percent reciprocal tariff imposed by Washington last year, Dhaka had signalled plans to order 25 Boeing aircraft.

Through negotiations, the rate was cut to 20 percent effective August 1, 2025, and further reduced to 19

percent under a trade agreement signed with the US on February 9, 2026. The civil aviation ministry approved the acquisition during the interim government, with only the formal signing pending.

The deal concludes more than three years of competition between Boeing and European rival Airbus for Biman’s next major fleet order.

A deal with Airbus gained traction in 2023 through high-level European engagement, including French President Emmanuel Macron’s visit and references in a Bangladesh-UK joint statement to a possible purchase of 10 Airbus aircraft, including freighters.

Under the previous Awami League government, a policy decision had been announced to buy 10 Airbus planes.

for carriers with small fleets, mixed operations bring disadvantages. “An airline must choose its fleet considering routes and distances.”

Biman has faced a shortage of aircraft in recent years after failing to secure planes through leasing, disrupting service to existing routes and delaying the launch of new services.

Officials said the 14 new aircraft are essential to expand capacity, strengthen international connectivity and meet future passenger and cargo demand.

On April 22, at a civil aviation ministry meeting, Biman outlined plans to operate flights to Yangon, Malé, New York, Kunming, Bahrain, Sydney, Wuhan, Jakarta and Seoul.

Experts noted that aircraft alone are not enough, stressing the need for

“

A mixed fleet would not be viable for Biman, which operates only 19 aircraft. You would need a whole new set of everything, including pilots, crews, engineers, and hangars for a mixed fleet, which will increase operational costs.

”



Aviation expert Kazi Wahidul Alam

But after former prime minister Sheikh Hasina’s ouster in the face of a mass uprising in August 2024 and amid pressure over US tariffs, the interim government shifted in favour of Boeing.

Debate over Boeing versus Airbus surfaced, with European officials arguing that Airbus would diversify Biman’s all Boeing fleet, while Boeing mounted a strong push to retain dominance.

Aviation expert Kazi Wahidul Alam said a mixed fleet would not be viable for Biman, which operates only 19 aircraft. “You would need a whole new set of everything, including pilots, crews, engineers and hangars for a mixed fleet, which will increase operational costs.”

He cautioned, however, that relying solely on one manufacturer may undermine competitiveness.

Another expert, ATM Nazrul Islam, said airlines can bargain better if they buy from both companies, but

manpower development, including pilots and cabin crew, as well as proper fleet and route planning. They said Biman has struggled to utilise its existing aircraft due to shortages of pilots and crew and poor management.

Although Bangladesh has air service agreements with about 50 countries, Biman currently flies to 22 international destinations in 14 countries, mostly short- and medium-haul. At its peak, Biman operated flights to 29 destinations, from New York to Tokyo and major European cities.

Despite a large captive market and loyal passengers, Biman’s market share on international routes is only about 25 percent, due to limited aircraft, poor service, mismanagement, weak planning and marketing, and lack of professionals, experts said.

Even so, Biman has posted profits for five consecutive years, recording a net profit of Tk 785 crore in fiscal 2024-25.

US suffered a ‘shameful defeat’

FROM PAGE 16

serving Iran.

And Iran’s parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said control of Hormuz would allow Tehran to “provide itself and its neighbours with the precious blessing of a future free from American presence and interference”.

Trump was expected to receive a briefing yesterday on new plans for potential military action in Iran from Admiral Brad Cooper, the head of US Central Command, two sources with knowledge of US planning told news site Axios.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz warned, meanwhile, that it was “possible that we may soon have to act again” against Iran to achieve the war’s objectives.

But the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards aerospace force, Majid Mousavi, said that even a “short and tactical” enemy operation would be met with “with painful, prolonged, and extensive strikes”.

“We have already seen the fate of your bases in the region; we will also see your warships” face the same, he

added, speaking to state TV.

This week Trump has reportedly told oil executives and national security officials to prepare for a long US blockade designed to force Tehran to surrender its nuclear programme, and, speaking to Axios, said: “They are choking like a stuffed pig.”

US Central Command said Wednesday in a social media post that it had reached a “significant milestone after successfully redirecting the 42nd commercial vessel attempting to violate the blockade”.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian called the US blockade “a disruption to lasting stability” in the Gulf that was “doomed to fail”.

Oil prices struck a four-year high yesterday. International benchmark Brent crude soared more than seven percent to \$126 a barrel, but then eased in afternoon trading in London.

UN chief Antonio Guterres said the closure of Hormuz was “strangling the global economy” and International Energy Agency chief Fatih Birol told a meeting at his Paris headquarters: “The world is facing the biggest energy crisis

BNP moves to reign in its ranks

FROM PAGE 16

organisational decisions.

Several senior leaders have taken up government responsibilities as ministers or lawmakers, while many others have been removed from party posts or are inactive.

This has created a vacuum in the organisational structure and weakened coordination between the central leadership and grassroots units.

Decision-making has also slowed in some areas because many influential leaders are now busy with government and parliamentary work.

BNP policymakers have primarily identified a breakdown in the chain of command, lack of coordination, internal feud and weak supervision as major reasons behind the situation.

Unacceptable activities by some leaders of associated bodies and front organisations are leaving a negative impact on people, said a BNP standing committee member, who is also a minister, seeking anonymity.

“The government and the party cannot be separated in people’s eyes. If party activists behave poorly, people will also blame the government. It is a wake-up call for both the government and the party.”

More than two months have passed since the election.

“The government is trying to perform well, but a section of party leaders and activists is doing things that are hurting the party’s image,” he added.

Party insiders said Tarique is considering a quick reorganisation of the BNP’s front and associate bodies, alongside measures to strengthen the party’s grassroots network.

He wants to keep the party active outside the government, they said.

For this, Tarique may assign senior

leaders who were not made ministers or MPs to oversee the reorganisation process and make party activities more dynamic.

BNP leaders said the party also wants to hold its national council by the end of the year.

Before that, it wants to activate grassroots units, reduce internal divisions and update committees at different levels.

The BNP last held its national council on March 19, 2016. Under the party constitution, a council is supposed to be held every three years.

Party leaders said the council could not be held during the last 17 years of Awami League rule because of political, legal and organisational constraints.

The council is important because it decides the party’s key committees and sets the organisational direction for the next term, they said.

Meanwhile, the terms of 10 out of 11 committees of the BNP’s affiliated and associate bodies have expired, according to party insiders.

The committees of Chhatra Dal, Swachhchasebak Dal, Krishak Dal, Mohila Dal, Muktijoddha Dal, Sramik Dal, Tanti Dal and Jatiotabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha (JASAS) have expired.

Subo Dal is still running with a partial committee, while Matsyajibi Dal has had no committee since 2024.

Chhatra Dal’s committee expired on March 1 this year. The Subo Dal central committee remains incomplete one and a half years after a partial committee was announced on July 9, 2024.

The Swachhchasebak Dal committee, formed on September 4, 2022, completed its term last year. Krishak Dal’s committee expired one and a half years ago.

Mohila Dal’s committee, formed in 2016 for a two-year term, has been functioning for nearly a decade. Muktiyoddha Dal and Sramik Dal are also operating with committees formed more than a decade ago.

The Tanti Dal committee, formed in 2019, completed its term in 2022. Matsyajibi Dal’s committee was dissolved in September 2024, but no new committee has been announced. JASAS’s three-year committee has been in place for nearly five years.

US deployments in Europe ‘in US interest’: EU

AFP, Brussels

The EU yesterday said that the deployment of US troops in Europe was in Washington’s interest, after President Donald Trump threatened to cut force numbers in Germany.

European Union spokeswoman Anitta Hipper said the United States was “a vital partner in contributing to Europe’s security and defence”.

“The deployment of US troops in Europe is also in the US interest in support of its global role,” she added.

Trump said the United States was considering reducing its troop deployment, following a row with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz over the Iran war.

The spat is the latest to rile up Trump against Washington’s European NATO allies, with the US leader already lashing out over their response to his attack on Iran.

21 killed in mob violence in April: MSF

FROM PAGE 16

Philpinagar in Kushtia’s Daulatpur upazila, triggering a huge outcry.

The persistent killings in mob violence were also discussed in parliament recently.

On April 20, Brahmanbaria-2 MP Rumeen Farhana told parliament that mob attacks continue despite repeated assurances from the home minister that such incidents will not be allowed in the country.

MSF, in its April report, said that as mob violence has not eased, the issue of public sense of security has become a matter of serious concern.

MSF statistics show that among the victims killed in mob beatings in April, three were killed over murder allegations,

seven over theft allegations, seven following altercations, two over robbery allegations, one over allegations of insulting remarks, and one over a land dispute.

At least 30 of the injured victims were handed over to the police, it added.

The rights body said that although there are signs of improvement in some areas of the human rights situation from March to April, deterioration or new risks are clearly noticeable in several other sectors, including violence against women and children and attacks on journalists.

MSF findings show that at least 312 incidents of violence against women and children were recorded in April, which is 23 more than the previous month. During the month, 54 rape

incidents, 14 gang rape incidents, and one case of rape and murder were reported. Among the victims, six were girls and women with disabilities.

Among the 54 rape victims, 18 were children and 14 were adolescent girls. Furthermore, in April, a total of 89 children, adolescent girls, and women were victims of murder, while the number was 73 in March.

MSF said that killings and injuries stemming from political violence decreased in April compared to March. In April, three people were killed and 303 were injured, while 14 people were killed and 390 were injured in March.

According to MSF, a total of six people died in jail custody in April. In the previous month, the number was 11.

Most reserved seat picks

FROM PAGE 16

candidates, 26 (72.22 percent) are multimillionaires, while among Jamaat-e-Islami’s nine candidates, five (56 percent) are multimillionaires. Additionally, the sole candidate from Jatiya Ganotantrik Party is also a multimillionaire.

Candidates with an average annual income of more than Tk 10 lakh account for 38.78 percent (19 people); among directly elected general seat MPs, this rate is 67.9 percent.

However, overall, in the 13th parliamentary election, including directly elected and reserved women’s seat members, the total number of multimillionaires is 269, which is 77.3 percent.

According to the affidavit information, the highest number of women candidates in reserved seats are lawyers: 26.5 percent.

The second highest profession is business (22.5 percent).

In addition, 12.2 percent are homemakers, 10.2 percent are teachers and 8.2 percent are directly involved in politics. Doctors account for 4.1 percent and the other professionals also make

up 4.1 percent.

At least three candidates for women’s reserved seats have more than 100 bhoori of gold ornaments either in their own names or jointly with their spouses. Among them, one candidate alone has 502 bhoori of gold ornaments in her own name.

Analysis of the total assets of multimillionaire candidates in reserved seats shows that their total immovable assets exceeding Tk 1 crore amount to Tk 66 crore and total movable assets amount to Tk 78 crore.

However, when immovable and movable assets are added separately, the total amount of assets stands at Tk 152 crore.

Party-wise, the rate of indebtedness is equal for BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami candidates at 22.22 percent. However, compared to reserved seat candidates (20.41 percent), directly elected MPs (50.84 percent) have 2.49 times higher indebtedness.

The analysis also highlights that 20.41 percent of candidates are in some form of debt or liability.

The average age of candidates for reserved seats is 52.17 years.

By age group, the highest number of

ICT asks how Qamrul got foreign report

FROM PAGE 16

Qamrul was allowed treatment at Bangladesh Medical University, where he remains. His lawyer later sought his transfer to Evercare Hospital, submitting several medical reports, and the tribunal initially approved the move.

At yesterday’s hearing, Chief Prosecutor Aminul Islam questioned the authenticity of those reports, saying defence documents showed Qamrul obtained a report from Mount Elizabeth Hospital on February 12 while in jail. He asked how such a report could be issued without the tribunal’s permission.

The tribunal pressed the defence on how the report was obtained and how a doctor issued it without

court approval. The defence said the examinations had been conducted with permission from a lower court. When the order was read out in the court, a tribunal member noted it contained no such provision.

The chief prosecutor also said another report submitted by the defence was signed by a doctor from a diagnostic centre in Kamrangirchar, within Qamrul’s former constituency. The tribunal chair questioned whether the doctor exists and how the report was issued without approval.

Contacted later, a lawyer for Qamrul told The Daily Star they were preparing to submit a certified copy of the lower court order permitting the

Bangladesh slides 3 spots

FROM PAGE 16

performance is analysed through five distinct lenses: political climate, legislative structures, economic pressures, social dynamics, and physical security.

Bangladesh performed poorer in economic, legal, and social indicators this year, which dragged its score down again.

In South Asia, Bangladesh is still ahead of Pakistan and India in ranking, but only by one and five notches respectively.

Nepal is 65 places ahead of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka 18, and Bhutan two.

About the Asia-Pacific, RSF said in its report, “It is one of the most repressive regions in the world – and the situation continues to deteriorate.

“On paper, virtually every country in the region recognises press freedom. In practice, the principle is systematically violated.”

Globally, for the first time in a quarter of a century, the overall average score of all the countries assessed has

Shamima appointed Dhaka SP

FROM PAGE 16

police officers, including Shamima, were transferred to different postings through two separate notifications issued by the Police-1 branch of the home ministry.

The notifications were signed by Deputy Secretary Tausif Ahmed on behalf of the president.

Among those transferred were six SP-ranked officers and six officers of the rank of additional deputy inspector general.

According to the notifications, current Dhaka SP Mizanur Rahman has been transferred as SP of the Police Bureau of Investigation.

Farmers race to save crops as rains pause

FROM PAGE 1

of the four days due to the persistent rainfall finally broke.

Since yesterday morning, hundreds of farmers and children were seen busy threshing, drying and boiling paddy.

“Now that we have the sun, it will help us reduce our losses,” said farmer Roish Uddin.

Paddy dries in a day if there is enough sunlight. “But we were not in luck for long,” he added.

Sitting beside his submerged land in Medar Beel of Kalmakanda in Netrokona, farmer Abdul Hai said: “The weather is improving, but everything is already lost for me.”

Out of ten acres, he managed to harvest two acres, and the rest are underwater.

“I don’t feel like staying at home. I am sitting here with the hope that the weather improves and my paddy will reappear,” he said.

Though the weather was favourable all day, thousands of farmers struggled to harvest paddy due to the shortage of agricultural labourers.

Take the case of Jahir Uddin, an elderly farmer of Korchar Haor in Jogairgaon village in Sunamganj Sadar Upazila.

He harvested more than 100 sacks of paddy, but the sacks remain unopened as the family has no money to employ labourers to do the job.

“We hope that the weather continues like this and we can dry the paddy,” said Jahir, whose wife, Rebeka Begum, is helping him dry paddy.

With no sunshine for eight days, the paddy they had harvested started sprouting.

“As the sun showed up in the sky today [Thursday], we are trying to dry as much as possible,” Rebeka said.

The relief, however, may not last, according to the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) and Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

The BMD yesterday issued a warning of heavy (44-88mm) to very heavy (over 88mm) rainfall over the Sylhet and Mymensingh divisions in the next 48 hours starting 1:00 pm Thursday.

In a bulletin issued yesterday, FFWC said there could be heavy to very heavy rainfall over the haor region in the next seven days and the flood situation could deteriorate.

Rainfall data shows no heavy rain recorded in the Haor regions or the Indian upstream areas. The water level at

never been so low, said RSF.

In over half of the world’s countries and territories (52.2 percent), the state of press freedom is categorised as “difficult” or “very serious”.

The “very serious” category was a small minority (13.7 percent) in 2002, when 20 percent of the global population lived in a country where the state of press freedom was categorised as “good”.

Twenty-five years later, less than 1 percent of the world’s population lives in a country that falls under the “good” category, the index showed.

Mohammad Sihab Qaiser Khan has been transferred as additional DIG of PBI.

RAB Directors Mohammad Kamruzzaman and Md Khalidul Haque Howlader have been made joint commissioners of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

DMP Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Robiul Hossain Bhuiyan has been made SP of the River Police, while APBN Additional SP Nusrat Jahan Mukta has been transferred as additional SP of the Special Branch.

The notifications said the transfers were made in the public interest and would take immediate effect.

Manu in Moulvibazar has receded below the pre-monsoon danger level, though four other rivers show a slight rise.

According to the FFWC, the Khowai River in Habiganj and Someshwari, Bhugai-Kangsha and Mogra rivers in Netrokona are flowing slightly above the danger mark at 3:00 pm yesterday.

With the projection of heavy to very heavy rainfall, the FFWC forecasts the Kushiara may breach the danger level soon and the Surma will approach the danger mark by Sunday, flooding more low-lying areas in Sylhet and Sunamganj.

The Baulai River at Khaliajuri may also cross the danger mark as early as Saturday, worsening conditions in Netrokona.

With no significant rainfall in the northeast region and upstream of India, the rivers showed a good sign of receding or standing still, said Partho Protim Barua, sub-divisional engineer of the FFWC.

While there is a forecast of rainfall in the coming days, the situation will not deteriorate anytime soon, he added.

[Our correspondents Dwoha Chowdhury, Mintu Deshwara, Jaydul Islam and Tafsilul Aziz contributed to the report]

GD-972



ও নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানি

The art of letting go

We return to old friendships and revisit places and ambitions, expecting to feel the same. When we don't, we assume something is missing. In reality, something has simply changed "us", and we haven't caught up to ourselves yet.

MUEEN WALEE MAHEER

We all have a locked chest existing in a half-physical, half-unnamed place. Inside it remains fragments of a self that had hoped to exist but never fully did. The dream of walking down the corridor of that institution. A gift from someone who hurt you, someone you once couldn't imagine a day without. Inside jokes that no longer belong to anyone. Certificates from goals you no longer care about.

They just stay. Untouched, unresolved, solemnly waiting.

And yet the moment someone suggests letting them go, something within us tightens. A resistance rises, disproportionate but undeniable.

The easy explanation is sunk cost: you've invested time, emotion, and years, so abandoning it feels like a waste. But sunk cost explains bad investments, not heartbreak. It explains why you might finish an overpriced, disappointing meal, but not why you still catch yourself daydreaming about someone you've sworn you've moved on from.

The real reason runs deeper than economics. It runs straight into identity.

These things persist not because

they still belong in your life, but because they've been absorbed into who you are. Like artefacts in a backroom archive, they're no longer part of the story unfolding. But they still take part in the story being told. We don't hold onto things. We hold onto who we were when they made sense. And as long as we hold onto that person, we cannot fully become the next one.

Jay Gatsby is the clearest proof of this. We think he loves Daisy Buchanan — but that's not quite right. What he loves is the person he became while loving her: the man with a green light across the water and a reason to reach for it. Five years of rebuilding himself into someone worthy of her is really just one long attempt to resurrect a self that he's already lost. And by the time he finds Daisy again, that self is gone. The

tragedy of Gatsby isn't that he can't have her. It's that the version of him who wanted her no longer exists, and he never noticed.

We do this too, just more unobtrusively. We return to old friendships and revisit places and ambitions, expecting to feel the same. When we don't, we assume something is missing. In reality, something has simply changed "us", and we haven't caught up to ourselves yet.

The opposite error is just as damaging. Raskolnikov, in *Crime and Punishment*, convinces himself that shedding his conscience will elevate him beyond ordinary men. The murder isn't just a crime; it's an experiment in self-reinvention. He lets go of the

one thing he believed was holding him back, and it destroys him completely.

He treats his conscience like a heavy winter coat, something which can be shrugged off to move faster. He realised too late that it was his skin, not his garment. What follows isn't divine punishment. It's the raw shock of a body that has flayed itself alive in the name of freedom.

This is what forced letting go actually looks like. Deleting every photo. Cutting off entire friend groups. Becoming someone new overnight. It feels like control. More often, it's just running away from something you never actually resolved.

So, if desperate clinging hollows you out and violent discarding breaks you, what does genuine release look like?

Marcus Aurelius didn't say "move on". He said something more precise: you cannot control what happens to you, only your relationship to it. *Amor fati*, love of fate, is not resignation. It is refusing to

make peace conditional on recovering something already lost.

Consider the student who spent years preparing for a future they thought they wanted or were told to want. When it doesn't happen, the grief is real. Not just for the outcome, but also for the version of themselves that had already been imagined, already made real in someone else's expectations.

Amor fati asks something difficult: grieve what was real, honour the effort that was yours, and then cease making your happiness dependent on a future that no longer exists. You have to let it go.

The self is not a sculpture that cracks when chipped; rather, it's a river, always moving, always reshaping itself around new ground. The chest remains a vessel for the version of yourself you once were. Clearing it is not betrayal. It is simply making room for the person you have, without quite realising it, already become.

Mueen Walee Maheer is an aspiring polymath who is currently a master of none but a fan of many. Send him a new obsession at mueenwaleemaheer@gmail.com



Understanding the nuances of self-projection in reading fiction

NUZHAT TAHIYA

There's a particular experience every reader is intimately familiar with: you're 250 pages deep into a novel, and suddenly a character does something that feels wrong — not poorly written, not out of character, but wrong in a way that stings personally. Perhaps they choose ambition over loyalty, or they forgive someone you wouldn't forgive, or they're content with a life you'd find stilling. The disappointment is real. You might even close the book.

This reaction reveals something significant about how we consume fiction. When we engage with stories primarily through self-projection — treating characters as vessels for our own experiences, values, and desires — we risk missing much of what fiction has to offer. More troublingly, we risk becoming hostile readers unable to appreciate narratives that don't reflect us.

Self-projection isn't inherently problematic. We naturally seek connection with fictional characters, and finding echoes of our own struggles in their stories can be profoundly meaningful. The danger emerges when projection becomes the primary or only lens through which we engage with narrative art. When we need characters to think like us, we've transformed fiction from a window into a mirror.

Consider the common online discourse around "problematic" characters. When audiences project themselves onto protagonists, they often struggle to accept that their stand-in might be flawed, morally complex, or even villainous. For instance, when Nabokov puts us inside Humbert Humbert's head, or when we are asked to sympathise with morally compromised characters, the point isn't to validate these perspectives but to unsettle us, to make us grapple with uncomfortable truths about human nature.

A character's mistakes become personal attacks; their moral failures feel like accusations. This leads to bizarre interpretive gymnastics where viewers bend over backwards to justify inexcusable actions or, conversely, reject entire

works because they can't bear to identify with someone imperfect. We see this in fan communities that wage wars over whether a character "deserves" redemption, as though their fictional arc were a referendum on the audience's own worthiness.

The economics of modern media have amplified this problem. Streaming platforms and social media algorithms excel at giving us more of what we already like, creating echo chambers of taste. Fan service has become a business model, with creators increasingly expected to deliver exactly what audiences project onto their works. We've seen beloved series derailed by desperate attempts to satisfy



ILLUSTRATION: ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

every faction of a splintered fanbase, each insisting their interpretation is the "correct" one because it aligns with their self-projection.

There's also something infantilising about the expectation that fiction should always comfort us, always reflect us back to ourselves in flattering ways. It treats art as a mirror meant only for admiration rather than a window into other lives and other ways of being. Children naturally engage with stories by putting themselves at the centre — every kid imagines themselves as the hero. Mature engagement with fiction requires growing past this, developing the capacity to care about characters who aren't us and to invest in stories that don't centre our experiences.

This isn't an argument against identification or emotional investment in media. Living vicariously through characters in a story we care about is one of fiction's greatest pleasures. The issue is when identification becomes so totalistic that we lose the ability to observe, to analyse, or to sit with discomfort. When we can't tell the difference between "this character is like me" and "this character is me", we collapse the necessary distance that allows fiction to do its work.

The remedy isn't to abandon emotional engagement but to cultivate critical empathy — the ability to understand and feel with characters while maintaining

Tender machinery of memory and knowledge

A simple guide to the Internet Archive

ALEENA YUSRA

The internet is a captivating, interconnected system of electronic devices that revolutionised the world as we know it today. However, beneath the glow of tech advancements lies the melancholic, sentimental presence in everyone's life. People began leaving pieces of themselves on the internet: cliché blogs, fandom forums, pixelated websites, and strange communities formed over shared interests.

However, the internet can forget, whether it be because of domain expiration or link rot.

Amid this current brutal cycle of monetisation and amnesia, the Internet Archive is one of the last gentle things online. It is a volunteer-supported digital library dedicated to preserving everything the modern web forgets: old websites, out-of-print books, abandoned games, and forgotten human traces still have a home here. It's also a love letter to curiosity, existing as the opposite of algorithmic feeds. Here, you can fall into rabbit holes no one engineered for you.

At its core lie two systems: the Wayback Machine and the general collection.

The Wayback Machine

The Wayback Machine is the Archive's flagship feature, boasting over a trillion archived web pages spanning nearly three decades.

Inserting website URLs and keywords relating to a site's name into the search box brings up the website with a timeline graph that lets you pick the specific year you're interested in. Choose a year, and a calendar appears with specific dates marked by a circle representing a preserved snapshot.

On the homepage lies the "save page now" feature, which allows anyone to archive any webpage instantly, whether it's a citation you need to preserve or a Tumblr blog about the cathartic experience of discovering Kurt Cobain at the age of 11.

General collection

The general collection is a divine ecosystem of knowledge and media that reflects the true soul and philosophy of the internet, consisting of hundreds of millions



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

of archived media.

Searching them effectively is key. Next to the site search bar is a drop-down menu. "Search Metadata" skims through titles, creator, description, date, and publisher. "Search Text Contents" searches inside the pages of millions of scanned books and documents for your keywords or phrases. Other filters allow searching through TV news captions or radio transcripts.

After any search, the left-side filters use faceted filtering to quickly narrow down results by media type, year, language, and collection.

Media formats

Each media segment offers countless unique and niche collections worth exploring. The drop-down list from the media icons presents its featured and top collections. Downloads for most media appear on the item page itself. To download lost, archived YouTube videos using the Wayback Machine, a command-line tool like "yt-dlp" is recommended.

The archive individually connects us all to the becoming of history through the "Upload" option at the top bar. Any relics of your life can be shared, be it a family photo or an Eid meal recipe.

The Archive's media collections are intimate yet revealing. The Prelinger Archives, for instance, preserve short-lived videos that reveal forgotten social norms and aesthetics. Moreover, broadcast news segments saved the texture of historic moments as they unfolded.

Its text collections extend this

repository of human experience. Users can lose themselves looking through personal ancestry through the Genealogy archive while also exploring the world's oldest digital library with tens of thousands of e-books still available.

The audio archives are strong with sentiment and connection. One of its famous archives is a legendary collection of fan-recorded tapes from the rock band Grateful Dead. There's also Netlabel Archives, which was an early 2000s hub of independent, experimental, electronic sounds.

Image archives range from breathtaking NASA astronomy images to user-uploaded photographs documenting the Occupy movement. The riveting software segment presents thrills like the Internet Arcade: a door into the coin-op culture of video games with a fully playable, browser-based classic arcade.

The archive, unfortunately, faces multiple threats from corporations or hacker groups that challenge its right to preserve culture through lawsuits, takedowns, and pressure to erase politically inconvenient histories. It is important to stand with the Archive during these times because, in the end, the Internet Archive is a simple non-profit with a vision of universal access to all knowledge, and it deserves our protection.

Aleena is a struggling student who loves robots and revolutions. Send her your esoteric online archives at: aleenayusra33@gmail.com.

‘No overnight 360-degree transformation, but a start’



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

SPORTS REPORTER

Since assuming responsibility as president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board’s (BCB) ad hoc committee on April 7, Tamim Iqbal had attended two previous press conferences without taking questions. On Thursday, however, he finally engaged directly with journalists in a full question-and-answer session following his opening remarks. During the briefing, Tamim outlined a wide range of development plans for Bangladesh cricket, spanning stadium infrastructure, domestic competition structure, grassroots expansion and administrative reforms. BCB ad hoc committee member Fahim Sinha was also present during the press conference. Tamim made it clear that the initiatives being introduced are part of a gradual process rather than immediate transformation. “I’ll say it again – we’re not doing anything that will completely transform Bangladesh cricket 360 degrees overnight, but this is a start,” he said.

TAMIM’S PRESSER: KEY TAKEAWAYS

Stadium upgrade planned: Proposal to install a 27,000 square feet canopy at Mirpur’s Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium to improve spectator comfort.

Solar initiative: The BCB is conducting surveys to install solar panels on stadium rooftops to reduce

electricity costs and promote environmental sustainability.

Tiered structure: A new second-tier, three-day competition under the National Cricket League (NCL) is proposed. This new setup aims to provide a platform for 150–200 additional players.

Home-and-away push: Aim to revive matches outside major centres to broaden reach and engagement.

Academy partnerships: The board will rent and invest in club and private academy facilities to host age-group (U-15, U-17) camps and domestic matches.

Election timeline: Process expected to begin May 3, with elections likely within 30–45 days.

Presidential ambition: Tamim confirmed he will strictly follow the constitution and intends to run for the BCB presidency in the upcoming election.

Constitutional limits: Ad hoc committee will not amend the constitution; such decisions left to an elected board.

Improving global ties: Emphasis on strengthening ties with the ICC and BCCI to secure better bilateral series and high-profile tours for Bangladesh.

On Shakib: Discussion on Shakib Al Hasan extended to include other former captains – Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Naimur Rahman Durjoy – with openness to future roles if legal issues are cleared.



Chase woes resurface in Sylhet

SPORTS REPORTER

They had reached 67 for two in the first 10 overs, but still could not come near the 155-run target – a familiar script of the Bangladesh national women’s cricket team’s long-standing struggles in chases over the 150-run mark once again unfolded yesterday. The Tigresses succumbed to a 21-run defeat in the second WT20I against Sri Lanka, conceding the three-match series 2-0 at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

Batting coach Nasiruddin Faruque perhaps pinpointed the problem area, stating the obvious – “an inability to accelerate in the final overs.”

Faruque also noted that the performance was marred by three run-outs, but admitted the larger concern for the Tigresses in the format. “In T20s, momentum shifts very quickly. While mistakes can sometimes be overcome in ODIs, it is much harder to recover from such errors in the T20 format,” he added.

After Sri Lanka posted 154 for four, Bangladesh made a steady start. They, however, failed to keep up with the climbing asking rate – a recurring theme in their T20I outings.

Opener Sharmin Akhter anchored the innings with an unbeaten 44 off 47 deliveries, while Juairiya Ferdous contributed 29 off 23 balls and Dilara Akter chipped in with a run-a-ball 23.

A closer look at those innings underlined the familiar shortcoming – too many deliveries were consumed without enough acceleration, leaving the middle order with too much to do. As the required rate climbed, the pressure told, and the hosts eventually limped to 133 for five in their allotted 20 overs.

Bangladesh’s difficulties in chasing sizeable totals in T20Is remain stark. They are yet to successfully chase a target of 150 or more in the format. On only two occasions have they crossed the 150-run mark while batting second – against Ireland and Pakistan – but ended up on the losing side both times.

Their highest successful chase in women’s T20Is remains 146 for four, achieved against Sri Lanka in 2023 – also their last win over the Islanders in this format.

Even yesterday’s defeat mirrored the outcome of the opening match, where Bangladesh fell short by 25 runs while chasing 162 at the same venue.

In both matches, Bangladesh opted to field first, a decision Faruque described as a “collective call”. But if the aim is to overcome their long-standing struggles in chasing, such choices will only bear fruit if accompanied by a shift in batting approach – particularly in how the innings is paced after a steady start.

With the series already decided, Bangladesh could have one final opportunity to address that recurring flaw. The third and final match, a dead rubber on Saturday at the same venue, offers a chance not just to salvage pride, but to show signs of progress in a phase of the game that continues to hold them back.

“Those who play in the national team... play five, six, even seven tournaments. But what about those who play in the third or second division? We’ve never created a proper platform for them (second and third division cricketers). This is why it’s rare for players from lower divisions to reach the national team.”

“All three former captains (Shakib Al Hasan, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, and Naimur Rahman Durjoy) are in similar situations... we should not only talk about one.”

41 DAYS TO GO



The youngest on the world stage

The record for the youngest player to appear in a FIFA World Cup is held by striker Norman Whiteside. He played for Northern Ireland against Yugoslavia in the group stage of the 1982 tournament in Spain at just 17 years and 41 days old. That match also marked his debut in international football.

****Visit The Daily Star’s website to also read: ‘When Senegal danced the world awake’**



A tense Champions League semifinal first leg on Wednesday saw hosts Atletico Madrid and Arsenal play out a nervy 1-1 draw, with both goals coming from the penalty spot. Viktor Gyokeres fired the visitors ahead before Julian Alvarez responded, the latter bringing up his 25th Champions League goal in just 41 appearances -- the fastest by an Argentine, surpassing Lionel Messi. Alvarez also became the first Atletico player to score 10 goals in a single edition of the tournament. However, late drama sparked fury as a potential Arsenal winner was denied after VAR overturned a penalty, leaving coach Mikel Arteta fuming.

PHOTO: REUTERS/ARSENAL



Mamunul exits, but regrets linger

SPORTS REPORTER

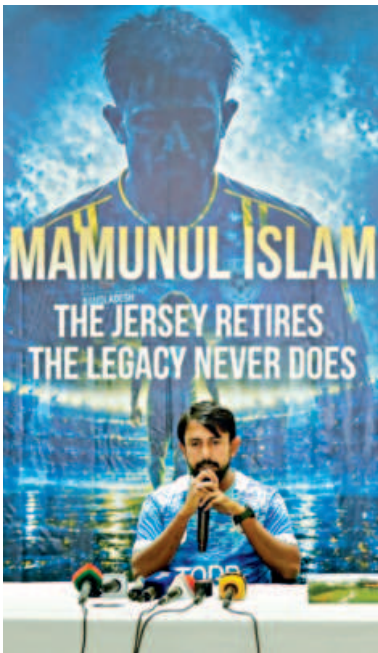
“Mamunul Islam has been the best midfielder of his generation, but did not get the stardom due to the lack of international success for the nation,” – that was how former star striker Alfaz Ahmed summed up the career of former Bangladesh captain Mamunul Islam.

The 40-year-old midfielder is set to bring the curtain down on a long, 30-year playing career when he takes the field for Fortis FC against Rahmatganj MFS in a Bangladesh Football League (BFL) match at the Bashundhara Kings Arena today.

Perhaps Alfaz’s words perfectly capture Mamunul’s journey – one that could be described as a tale of unfinished business, particularly on the international stage.

“I don’t know how much I could contribute to the nation, but there was no shortage of effort when I represented Bangladesh on the international stage,” an emotional Mamunul said at his retirement announcement briefing at Fortis FC in Madani Avenue yesterday.

Although he never won silverware in the red and green, Mamunul will be remembered by fans for his distinctive presence in midfield – his long hair, precise left-footed passes, dangerous set-pieces, and swift transitions that often



unsettled opposition defences.

Mamunul spoke candidly about two lingering regrets – not winning the SAFF Championship and failing to get playing time during his stint with Indian Super League side Atletico de Kolkata.

Yet, what resonated most in his words was the absence of a proper farewell in national colours – a moment he never quite got.

MAMUNUL ISLAM, 40

Caps: 75 matches — **goals:** 3, **assists:** 15
Debut: vs Indonesia, FIFA friendly, 2007

Last match: vs Burundi, Bangabandhu Gold Cup, 2020
Captaincy debut: vs Nepal, FIFA friendly, 2012

Last as captain: vs Bhutan, Asian Cup qualifiers, 2018

Domestic career: Brothers Union 2005; Abahani 2008, 2018–20; Mohammedan SC 2009; Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, Sheikh Russel KC, Muktijoddha Sangsad and Chittagong Abahani, before spending his final four years at Fortis FC.

“I didn’t expect such honour from my club Fortis FC during my retirement because I did not receive the recognition I deserved from the national team despite representing the country for 15 years. It is difficult to explain the emotions a player goes through at this stage,” he said.

For Mamunul, his final appearance for Bangladesh came

quietly – as a substitute against Burundi in 2020, without the closure he had hoped for.

A former BKSP student, he represented several top domestic sides, including Abahani, Mohammedan SC, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, Sheikh Russel KC, Muktijoddha Sangsad and Chittagong Abahani, before spending his final four years at Fortis FC.

In his own words, Mamunul achieved “name, fame, money, trophies and individual accolades” in his career – yet none of it, he admitted, compares to the unfulfilled dream of winning something for the country.

As he prepares for one last appearance, Mamunul remains uncertain about life after retirement, though he has expressed interest in continuing with Fortis FC in some capacity if given the opportunity.

But beyond the future, it is the past that seems to linger – the absence of a defining international triumph, an opportunity abroad that never truly came, and a farewell that never materialised.

And so, as he walks off the pitch for the final time, Mamunul’s career may be remembered not just for its longevity and achievements, but for the lingering sense of what might have been.



Brazilian forward Dorieltton Gomes was decisive as Bashundhara Kings came from behind to beat Mohammedan 2-1 in a crucial Bangladesh Football League match at Cumilla on Thursday. Dorieltton scored the winner after setting up the equaliser for Faisal Ahmed Fahim, following Mozaffarjon Muzaffarov’s opener in the 28th minute. Kings lead the table with 34 points from 15 matches, six clear of Abahani, while Mohammedan are sixth on 17 points. Brothers Union and Arambagh KS drew 2-2 in Munshiganj, with both teams on 14 points from 15 matches.

PHOTO: BFF



WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

Bangladesh slides 3 spots to 152nd

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has slipped down three places to 152nd on the World Press Freedom Index this year, losing some of last year's gains.

Reporters sans frontières (RSF), or Reporters Without Borders, published the index yesterday, putting Bangladesh's score at 33.05.

Last year, Bangladesh's score increased to 33.71 from 27.64 a year earlier. The jump helped Bangladesh climb an unprecedented 16 places in last year's index.

The index is based on a score ranging from zero to 100 that is assigned to each country or territory, with 100 being the best possible score, or the highest possible level of press freedom, and zero the worst.

This score is calculated on the basis of a tally of abuses against media and journalists in connection with their work and a qualitative analysis of the situation in each country.

Depending on their scores, countries are classified in a range between "good" and "very serious".

Bangladesh is classified as "very serious", a category for countries with a score between zero and 40.

To determine a nation's press freedom ranking, its

SEE PAGE 12 COL 4



Perched face-to-face on a sunlit branch in Rangamati's Kaptai upazila, two Asian glossy starlings are locked in what feels like an intimate conversation. Native across South and Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh, these highly adaptable birds thrive in forests, mangroves and even busy urban spaces. Their diet is delightfully varied -- soft fruits like figs, mango and papaya, alongside insects they pick deftly from foliage. Social and often noisy, they move in flocks, sometimes mimicking sounds from their surroundings. Classified as Least Concern by the IUCN, they remain widespread, though local pressures such as habitat change and conflict with fruit growers threaten their populations.

PHOTO: KAMOL DAS

21 killed in mob violence in April: MSF

Rights body reports 312 incidents of violence against women, children

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights body Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF) yesterday said incidents of mob violence rose in April, surpassing the figures recorded in the previous month.

At least 21 people were killed and 49 others were critically injured in mob beatings across the country in April, while 19 people were killed and 31 were injured in similar incidents in the previous month, MSF said in its monthly monitoring report.

In February, 18 people were killed and 33 others were injured, while at least 21 people were killed in mob beatings in January, up from 10 deaths recorded in December 2025, according to MSF.

On April 11, 52-year-old pir Abdur Rahman alias Shamim al Jahangir was beaten and hacked to death by a mob at his darbar (shrine) in

SEE PAGE 12 COL 4

BNP moves to reign in its ranks

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The ruling BNP is planning to restore its chain of command, discipline leaders and activists, and strengthen its organisational structure amid concerns that unruly behaviour by some party members could damage the government's public image.

As part of this effort, BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman is expected to meet with grassroots leaders in the second week of this month to provide them with direct instructions on party discipline and organisational activities.

This will be Tarique's first such meeting with grassroots leaders after becoming the prime minister.

BNP policymakers said the party leadership has become concerned over discourteous behaviour by some leaders and activists with the public, local-level infighting, weak coordination and allegations of links with criminal elements.

"We are planning to hold a meeting with leaders of all district units, where our leader Tarique Rahman will give them necessary directives on strengthening organisational activities and maintaining party discipline," said Syed Emran Saleh Prince, joint secretary general of BNP.

Presidents, general secretaries, conveners and member secretaries of 82 organisational districts are expected to attend the meeting, according to party sources.

Grassroots leaders may also be asked to share their views on the party, the government's performance, local problems, internal disputes and organisational weaknesses in their areas.

Two senior ministers, who are also BNP policymakers, told this newspaper that they would soon sit with Tarique to discuss the party's next course of action.

They said the party chief wants to hear from both central and grassroots leaders before taking major

SEE PAGE 12 COL 1

US suffered a 'shameful defeat'

Says Khamenei; Trump to be briefed on Iran military options

Trump warns Iran blockade could last for months	US seeks 'maritime freedom' coalition to restart Hormuz	Israel defence minister says it may have to 'act again' against Iran
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AGENCIES

Iran's supreme leader yesterday declared that the United States had suffered a shameful defeat, defiantly rejecting a warning from President Donald Trump that an economically punishing US naval blockade could be enforced for months to come.

Oil prices hit a four-year high, then fell back slightly, before Mojtaba Khamenei issued a written message read out on state television declaring that Iran was now in the driver's seat in the crisis.

"Today, two months after the largest military deployment and aggression by the world's bullies in the region, and the United States' disgraceful defeat in its plans, a new chapter is unfolding for the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz," he said, hailing Iran's control over shipping in the strait.

He said US bases in the region "lack even the capacity to ensure their own security, let alone provide any hope of securing their allies."

He went on to predict a bright future for the Gulf without the United States, saying those who interfere in the region from afar "have no place there except at the bottom of its waters".

Khamenei was wounded in the initial US-Israeli strikes that killed his father Ali Khamenei, and has not been seen in public since being named his successor as supreme leader last month.

The United States imposed a blockade on Iran's ports two weeks ago, while the Islamic republic has maintained its stranglehold over the strategic Strait of Hormuz since the start of the Middle East war at the end of February.

Now Washington is seeking to set up an international coalition comprising allied states and shipping firms to coordinate safe passage through Hormuz, a State Department official told AFP -- while maintaining its blockade of ships

SEE PAGE 12 COL 1

Shamima appointed Dhaka SP

In a first for the district, DC and police super now both women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shamima Pervin has been appointed superintendent of police (SP) of Dhaka district, becoming the first woman to hold the post in Dhaka.

She earlier served as assistant inspector general of police (Education, Sports and Culture) at the Police Headquarters.

On April 22, Farida Khanom, a deputy secretary at the home ministry, was appointed deputy commissioner of Dhaka, also becoming the first woman to hold the post in Dhaka.

As of yesterday, Dhaka's DC and SP are now both women.

Shamima is also the spouse of Rakibul Islam, lawmaker from Khulna-3 and whip of the 13th parliament.

Yesterday, 12 senior

SEE PAGE 12 COL 4

Most reserved seat picks highly educated, rich

Says TIB in its analysis of affidavits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly two-thirds of the nominees for reserved women's seats are both highly educated and millionaires, said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in a statement yesterday.

Around 65 percent of the candidates declared multimillionaire status, while more than 63 percent reported postgraduate or higher qualifications in their affidavits, it said.

TIB presented this picture through an analysis of the affidavit information of 49 nominated candidates for the reserved women's seats in the 13th National Parliament submitted to the Election Commission.

Candidates for reserved women's seats are significantly ahead of directly elected members of parliament in terms of educational qualifications, said the anti-graft watchdog.

In these seats, 63.3 percent of candidates hold postgraduate or higher degrees, whereas among elected MPs, this rate is 50.7 percent.

Overall, 52.63 percent of all members hold postgraduate or higher degrees, including directly elected and reserved women's seat members.

Among the reserved women's seat candidates, 27 percent are graduates and 4.1 percent have passed higher secondary education. The rate of self-educated candidates is 4.1 percent and secondary school graduates account for 2.1 percent.

According to the analysis, out of 49 candidates, 32 (65.31 percent) are multi-millionaires based on the total value of movable and immovable assets, while 25 are multimillionaires based on movable assets and 14 based on immovable assets.

A party-wise analysis shows that among BNP's 36

SEE PAGE 12 COL 4

ICT asks how Qamrul got foreign report

Stays its order to transfer to Evercare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday expressed surprise at how former food minister Qamrul Islam, now in jail, obtained a medical report from a Singapore hospital without its permission.

The tribunal sought an explanation from his lawyer, stayed its earlier order allowing his transfer from Bangladesh Medical University to Evercare Hospital Dhaka, and directed that his medical reports be submitted within 15 days.

Arrested on November 18, 2024, Qamrul faces charges of crimes against humanity linked to the July uprising.

Typically, inmates receive treatment at prison hospitals. After falling ill in custody,

SEE PAGE 12 COL 4



Biman Managing Director Kaizer Sohel Ahmed and Boeing Vice President Paul Righi sign a \$3.7 billion deal for 14 aircraft in the presence of senior government officials, diplomats and aviation executives at a city hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BIMAN

Tree that can filter 98% of microplastics from tap water

CNN ONLINE

The moringa tree, known as the "miracle tree", is one of the most nutrient-dense plants on the planet and is prized for its healing qualities. It also has another huge benefit, according to new research: it's excellent at removing microplastics from water.

A team of scientists from Brazil and the United Kingdom found extracts of seeds from these fast-growing trees are just as effective at removing microplastics from drinking water as commonly used chemicals, according to their findings published in April.

Moringa trees have been used to purify water for millennia, with evidence of their use by ancient Greeks, Romans and Egyptians, said

Adriano Gonçalves dos Reis, a study author and a professor at the Institute of Science and Technology of São Paulo State University.

He and his colleagues have been studying the tree's seeds for a decade, specifically the role they can play as a "coagulant", a substance which causes tiny particles in water to stick together so they can be filtered out. Given growing concerns over microplastics in drinking water, they decided to look at the moringa's potential for removing them.