

**We're like pirates... We... land on top of it and we took over the ship... It's a very profitable business.**  
Donald Trump on US Navy ops in the Gulf



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## Harassment of journalists cuts across govts

Star analysis of V-Dem data chronicles harsh conditions faced by country's press

ABDULLAH HEL BUBUN

For much of Bangladesh's history, journalists who challenged those in power have faced harassment, arrest, or intimidation, regardless of who ruled the country.

Data from the Sweden-based Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project shows that for nearly half of Bangladesh's history as an independent country, journalists who reported critically were routinely punished and sometimes forced out of the profession.

The pattern cuts across regimes. Bangladesh recorded hostile conditions for journalists in 27 of the 55 years tracked by V-Dem, with nine of the country's 10



**RELISHING THE RAIN ...** Unfazed by the downpour, students walking home together, their easy stride and shared laughter turning a grey afternoon into a light and wholesome moment. The photo was taken on the Maulana Bhashani Road near the High Court yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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## Journalists held without trial for up to 620 days

ZYMA ISLAM

As countries around the globe today celebrate the World Press Freedom Day, five senior journalists remain behind bars for between 593 and 620 days in Bangladesh. None of them have been formally charged since their arrest after the 2024 July uprising.

The deaths of the July protesters they are being held over are real, but the charges they face seem unreal.

Farzana Rupa, Shakil Ahmed, Shyamal Dutta, and Mozammel Haque Babu are accused of murdering Mahfuz Alam Shraban, a 21-year-old BNP activist and pharmaceutical worker killed during the protests in Mirpur on August 5, 2024.

The case filed over Shraban's death states that protesters passing through the road between Mirpur Complex and Mirpur Model Police Station were attacked by security forces and Awami League activists

### WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

- 9 of the 10 worst-ever scores occurred during 2014-2024
- The single worst year was 1975 when Baksal was introduced
- ErsHAD's military rule (1982-1990) was the second major repression period

worst-ever scores occurring during the final three terms of Sheikh Hasina, between 2014 and 2024. During those years, journalists who offended powerful political or state actors were often subjected to legal action, detention, or intimidation.

One such case unfolded in March 2023, when Shamsuzzaman Shams, a correspondent for the daily Prothom Alo, was arrested under the Digital Security Act after reporting on rising food prices. His story quoted a day labourer asking, "What will I do with independence if I cannot afford food?"

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## Farmers forced to sell paddy at half its cost

Rain keeps piling havoc on Boro harvest; govt procurement begins

SUKANTA HALDER, JAYDUL ISLAM, MINTU DESHWARA

Farmers in the haor region have suffered a further decline in Boro paddy prices as intermittent rain and clouds continue to prevent proper drying of harvested crops.

Farmers said harvested paddy has become wet, with grains sprouting, making it unsuitable for market sale, forcing distress sales that often fail to cover production costs.

Boro accounts for nearly 55 percent of

Bangladesh's annual rice output, with the season running from December to April.

To ease the crisis, the government has brought forward Boro rice procurement in six haor districts by 12 days from today. The districts are Sunamganj, Sylhet, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, Netrokona, and Kishoreganj. Paddy procurement will also begin across the nation today as per the previous schedule.

Yet many farmers, unable to stock their harvest due to rain, have already sold to millers

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## Attack on Star 'heinous'

Speakers call for justice at The Daily Star's 35th anniversary celebrations in Ctg city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Politicians, business leaders, academics, civil society members, students and others yesterday joined The Daily Star in celebrating its 35th anniversary in Chattogram city, condemning the December 18 mob attack on the newspaper's Dhaka office last year and demanding punishment for the perpetrators.

Guests extended greetings to the paper, noting that independent and objective journalism is the mirror of a democratic society and that The Daily Star has upheld this principle since its journey began in 1991.

In turn, Mahfuz Anam, the editor and publisher, pledged to continue practising independent and responsible journalism.

The event held at Hotel Agrabad's Ichhamati Hall commemorated

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**While rains have damaged crops in different districts, Naogaon has largely been spared. Yet clouds over the past five days kept farm workers from harvesting ripe Boro paddy due to fear of lightning strikes and hailstorms. Yesterday, farmers at Bhasso village in Manda upazila began cutting crops despite the looming threat of thunderstorms.**

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## DC CONFERENCE

### Big projects top agenda as meetings begin today

BAHARAM KHAN

The first DC Conference since the formation of the BNP government is set to begin today, with the four day event featuring several proposals submitted by deputy commissioners from different districts.

The proposals to be submitted, however, lack focus on identifying or addressing the reasons behind disruptions in public services in field administration.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will inaugurate the conference at 10:30am at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital. Following the opening ceremony, ministry-based working sessions will begin.

A total of 498 proposals have been selected for discussion, with 44 -- the highest number -- related to the health ministry.

Ministers, state ministers, advisers, secretaries, and other high-level

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## Lively debate, yet much left wanting

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The first session of the parliament ended with the promise of a vibrant House with lively debates but also revealed weaknesses in the failure to adopt reforms.

On one hand, active participation of the opposition together with the prime minister's call for dialogue signalled hope for a more effective and democratic parliament. On the other, procedural failures, and MPs' reluctance to act without the prime minister exposed structural weaknesses.

Expectations are high that the 13th parliament -- elected through broadly accepted polls after years of controversy -- will break from the old pattern of boycotts, hollow debates, and acting as little more than a rubber stamp for ruling parties.

The hope is that the new parliament will emerge as a genuine forum of democratic practice grounded in constructive debate and a stronger role in holding the government accountable.

The maiden session, held from March 12 to April 30, was marked by heated exchanges on issues ranging from the Liberation War (and the main opposition Jamaat-e-Islami's role during that time) to the July charter, reform proposals, the fuel crisis, law and order, and the economic situation. These discussions kept the House vibrant marked by occasional flare-ups. But even the opposition's walk-outs were instances of constructive protest.



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Politicians, business leaders, academics, civil society members, students and others joined The Daily Star yesterday in celebrating its 35th anniversary in Chattogram. Among others, State Minister for CHT Affairs Mir Mohammed Helal Uddin and CCC Mayor Sahadat Hossain were present. The event at Hotel Agrabad marked the first stop in a month-long divisional tour, following the central programme in Dhaka on April 24-25. Coming just months after the December 18, 2025, mob attack on its Dhaka office, the gathering featured a documentary and photo exhibition on the incident. Similar programmes will next be held in Barishal, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Rangpur and Mymensingh. PHOTOS: RAJIB RAIHANVA

## Attack on Star 'heinous'

FROM PAGE 1  
more than three decades of a journey guided by its founding motto "Journalism Without Fear or Favour".  
MASalam, former vice-president of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association, termed the December 18 attack "heinous" and urged legal action from the government.  
Delwar Majumder, former president of the Institute of Engineers Bangladesh, Chattogram centre, said, "I spent the whole night in tension after learning that journalists were stranded on the rooftop during the assault."  
Mir Mohammad Helal Uddin, state minister for land and CHT affairs, said no community can sustain itself without press freedom. "I humbly request The Daily Star to criticise our work in a constructive manner."  
Chattogram City Corporation Mayor Dr Sahadat Hossain praised the newspaper's motto, saying the paper truly practises independent journalism. "I urge the editor to highlight the issues

of Chattogram more prominently in the newspaper reports."  
Abu Sufian, BNP lawmaker from Chattogram-9, expressed confidence that the paper would continue its commitment to the people in the future just as it has for many years.  
The celebration followed a central event held at the newspaper's Dhaka office on April 24-25. Chattogram marked the first stop in a month-long divisional tour that will see the anniversary celebrated in Barishal, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Rangpur and Mymensingh as part of the month-long tour.  
Kamal Ahmed, the newspaper's consulting editor, said news media is inseparable from democracy. "We never thought we could come under an attack after the July uprising. The attack proves that those who don't like independent journalism are still active."  
Mahfuz Anam stressed that a newspaper's popularity depends on its connection with readers, pledging

more coverage of Chattogram as part of national development.  
"Those who are in power should understand that news media is the only way for the government to know the right information," he added.  
He urged the people of Chattogram to patronise the independent journalism, adding, "We pledge that we will be responsible."  
The programme commenced at 4:30 pm with the national anthem, followed by a one-minute silence observed in memory of the martyrs of the Liberation War and those who lost their lives during the anti-autocracy movement in 1990 and the July uprising in 2024.  
This anniversary carried a special weight, coming just months after last year's harrowing attack on The Daily Star office in Dhaka on December 18. During the incident, a mob set the building on fire, endangering the lives of 30 staff members, mostly journalists, who were trapped on the rooftop before being rescued.

Despite the destruction of six floors, the newspaper did not miss a single day of publication. The following morning, it hit the stands with a defiant, single-word headline: "UNBOWED".  
"Our support for more than three decades has helped us continue our work through the most difficult times," the newspaper stated in a tribute to its readers and patrons. "The headline 'UNBOWED' was not just a word; it was our commitment to ethical journalism."  
The Chattogram event featured a documentary screening and photo exhibition on the attack. Attendees included politicians from across the spectrum — BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, left-leaning organisations, Helafat-e-Islam, the National Citizen Party, the Communist Party and Ganosambhati Andolon — as well as leading business figures from BSRM Group, Pacific Jeans, Eastern Apparels, Asian Group, Independent Apparels and others.

## Farmers forced to sell paddy

FROM PAGE 1  
and traders at far cheaper rates.  
Farmers interviewed by The Daily Star said prices plunged from Tk 750-1,100 per maund (37.32 kg) earlier in the season to Tk 600 now, nearly half the production cost.  
Bidhan Sarkar of Kalmakanda upazila in Netrokona said he sold at Tk 750 per maund initially, but yesterday the price dropped to Tk 600.  
"Due to inadequate sunlight, paddy cannot be dried properly, leading to further decline," he said.  
The rates were similar at markets in Barhata upazila.  
At Fakir Bazar, farmer Roni Mia said the millers and traders were offering Tk 600 per maund. Just days ago, he sold the paddy at Tk 800.  
"No one is willing to buy my wet paddy," he said. Rice trader Khokon Mia said, "If wet paddy is stored, it sprouts. We bought some at Tk 600-650 [per maund] but faced losses. We will resume once there is sunshine."  
Rakibul Hasan, additional deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Netrokona, said 8,190 hectares of haor land and 5,276 hectares of non haor land were submerged, raising concern about meeting the production target for the district.  
The department estimates that more than 80,000 farmers have been affected directly due to the situation, according to him.  
In Kishoreganj, farmer Alim Uddin of Mithamoin said he cultivated paddy on nearly three hectares of land. "In mid-April, I sold at Tk 750-800 per maund. Just five days ago, I had to sell at Tk 700. Traders said the colour deteriorated, further reducing the price."  
Ashraf Islam of Ina upazila said he struggled to sell 100 maunds three days ago. "Traders offered Tk 600. After visiting 10 markets, I sold at Tk 650. But my production cost exceeds Tk 1,200 per maund."  
Md Sadiqur Rahman, deputy director of DAE in Kishoreganj, said rain since yesterday morning has raised river and floodwater levels, submerging nearly 7,000 hectares of haor paddy fields.  
Preliminary estimates suggest more

than 21,000 farmers have been affected, according to him.  
In Habiganj, farmer Azizul Islam of Baniachong said his harvested paddy is rotting due to cloudy weather. "At the start of the season, I sold at Tk 1,000-1,100 per maund. Now I am forced to sell at Tk 600."  
According to Habiganj DAE, 11,300 hectares of ripe paddy fields have been submerged, with about 20,000 farmers affected as of May 2, said Additional Deputy Director Deepak Kumar Biswas.  
The Bangladesh Meteorological Department has forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall in Dhaka, Mymensingh, Chattogram, and Sylhet divisions over the 48 hours from 1:00pm yesterday, warning of temporary waterlogging and possible landslides in hilly areas.  
As Boro production increased from 2.01 crore tonnes in FY22 to 2.13 crore tonnes in the last fiscal year, the government raised the target to 2.24 crore tonnes this season.  
The government's Boro acreage also increased by 3.29 percent to 50.50 lakh hectares in the ongoing 2025-26 fiscal year, according to provisional DAE data.  
Despite rising cultivation costs and losses due to the weather this season, the government on April 22 announced procurement prices would remain unchanged.  
The food ministry this season will buy five lakh tonnes of paddy at Tk 36 per kg, a fraction of the targeted production.  
Agriculture Minister Mohammad Amin Ur Rashid spoke to reporters about the haor region's situation after attending the inauguration of the nationwide Notun Kuri Sports 2026 by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in Sylhet.  
Amin said announcements will be made at the union level to collect paddy at fair prices.  
If purchased directly from farmers, they could earn up to 30 percent more, he said.  
He added that, alongside a three-month food-friendly programme for severely affected haor farmers, new projects will be taken to extend support to other affected farmers as well.  
[Our Kishoreganj Correspondent Tafsilul Aziz contributed to this report]

## Harassment of journalists cuts across govts

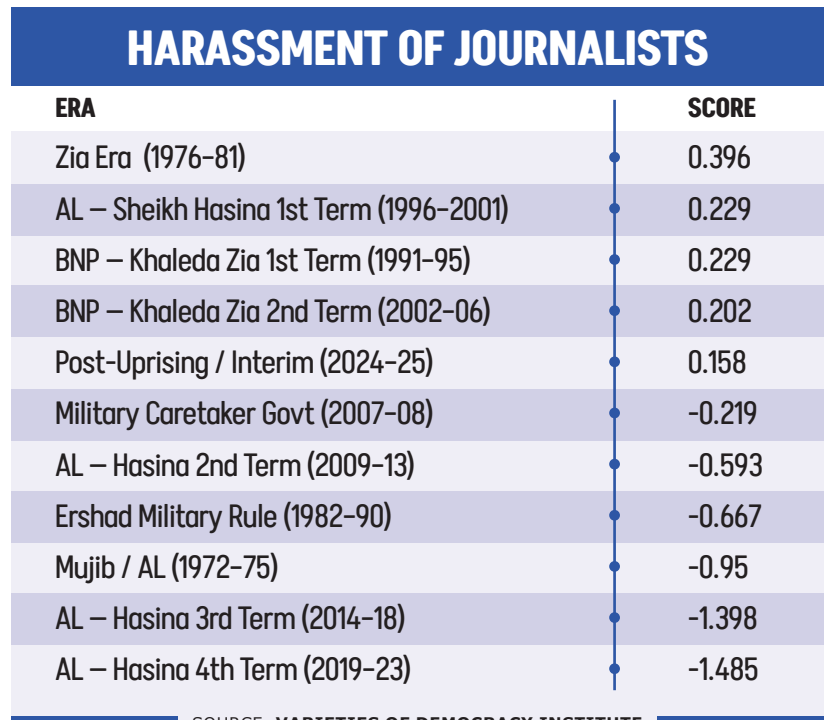
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The arrest triggered widespread concern among journalists, who saw it as a warning about the cost of critical reporting.  
Shams's case was not an isolated one. Journalists such as Mahfuz Ullah, Enayetullah Khan, Tasneem Khalil, Shahriar Kabir, Saleem Samad, Tipu Sultan and Priscilla Raj have faced arrest, torture, or intimidation under different administrations. Poet Al Mahmud, who once edited Ganakantha, the mouthpiece of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, was also among those targeted.

of Gothenburg that tracks the state of democracy and fundamental freedoms across the globe over time.  
Its datasets are built from expert assessments by thousands of country specialists and are widely regarded as among the most comprehensive measures of democratic conditions, including press freedom. V-Dem data is frequently cited by international media such as The New York Times, The Guardian, and The Economist, and is used by governments, the United Nations, the European Union, and policy institutions.  
The V-Dem Harassment of Journalists indicator (v2meharjrn) tracks whether journalists are arrested, imprisoned, assaulted, or killed for carrying out legitimate journalistic work, whether by state authorities or powerful non-state actors.  
The figures used in this analysis are sourced from V-Dem's latest release, Country-Year Version 16, in March 2026. The data offers a statistical record of what many journalists in Bangladesh have long experienced firsthand.  
Notably, Bangladesh has had two distinct experiences — one where journalists who offend powerful actors are almost always harassed and eventually forced to stop, and another where the environment is mixed, with some journalists suppressed while others manage to continue freely.  
WORST YEARS  
Bangladesh's record on press freedom shows three distinct periods when journalists faced the harshest repression: the final year of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's rule in 1975, the military dictatorship of General HM Ershad from the early 1980s to 1990, and the last two terms of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, from 2014 to 2024.  
The most severe year on record was 1975, when Mujib introduced the one-party rule called Baksal. That move saw all privately-owned newspapers shut and the country's press reduced to just four state-controlled outlets.  
Press freedom again deteriorated sharply after Ershad seized power in March 1982. Throughout his nine years in office, journalists who challenged the regime were regularly censored, harassed, or intimidated. Newspapers were issued press notes instructing them on what to publish or avoid, and those that resisted faced bans or closure.  
Publications such as Jajai Din and weekly Bichinta faced closure during this period. V-Dem records show that conditions for journalists remained consistently severe throughout Ershad's rule, with only marginal improvement even as he later sought legitimacy through controlled elections.  
The longest and most sustained period of harassment, however, came during Hasina's final two terms. Nine of Bangladesh's 10 worst-ever scores on the V-Dem Harassment of Journalists Index fall between 2014 and 2024.  
During this period, conditions repeatedly reached levels indicating that journalists critical of powerful actors were often subjected to legal action, detention, or intimidation. Earlier

years in the same period also reflected widespread pressure on the press.  
The Digital Security Act of 2018 allowed journalists to be prosecuted under broadly defined offences that covered much of online and print criticism of the government.  
Contacted, Md Saiful Islam Chowdhury, associate professor at the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at Dhaka University, said that all Bangladeshi governments, irrespective of party, whether civilian or military, have been repressive.  
According to him, the same strategies

Yunus, although many journalists lost jobs or faced court cases on flimsy murder charges, Bangladesh recorded its second-lowest level of journalist harassment for journalistic work, according to the V-Dem data.  
Press freedom advocates attributed the improvement to the suspension of politically motivated prosecutions by the government, the easing of surveillance, and the absence of a dominant ruling party apparatus during the transition period.  
The longest stretch of comparatively lower pressure occurred between 1991

SCORE RANGE	MEANING
-3.33 to -1.78	No journalists dare to engage in activities that would offend powerful actors, as harassment or worse is certain
-1.78 to -0.32	Journalists who offend powerful actors are almost always harassed or worse, and are eventually forced to stop
-0.32 to 1.22	Some journalists who offend powerful actors are forced to stop, but others manage to continue practicing freely
1.22 to 2.80	Harassment of journalists is rare, and those responsible would be identified and punished
2.80 to 4.13	Journalists are never harassed by governmental or powerful non-governmental actors



and laws — such as anti-terrorism law — used to suppress opposition parties are also used to curb the media and newspapers.  
SHORT LIVED BETTER YEARS  
Bangladesh has experienced brief periods when pressure on journalists eased, but those moments proved fragile and temporary. V-Dem data shows lower levels of harassment between 1978 and 1981, during the rule of Ziaur Rahman.  
During this period, the government took steps that reduced direct state control over the press, including establishing the Press Institute of Bangladesh, forming the Press Council as an arbitration body, and granting land for the National Press Club.  
Media researchers note that these institutional moves created limited space for journalistic activities after the near-total press shutdown imposed under Baksal in 1975.  
During this comparatively better period, journalists who challenged the prevailing order were not spared. US journalist Lawrence Lifschultz was expelled from the country after reporting on the trial of Colonel Taher.  
Another relative improvement came after the fall of Hasina's government in 2024.  
In 2025, under the interim administration led by Muhammad

and 2005, following the restoration of electoral democracy. This period saw a set of legal reforms and rapid expansion of the media sector, with the launch of influential national dailies such as Aiker Kagoj, The Daily Star, and Prothom Alo, as well as the introduction of private television through ATN Bangla.  
While governments formed by both the BNP and Awami League retained restrictive laws, they largely refrained from dismantling independent media outright, allowing competition and audience growth to strengthen newsroom influence, analysis shows.  
Even the periods V-Dem identifies as relatively better were not without serious incidents. Between 1991 and 2005, both press and television channels came under government pressures. For instance, Prothom Alo journalist Tipu Sultan was attacked for journalistic work in 2001 and Ekushey TV was shut down in 2002.  
"Simply put, the Bangladeshi ruling class does not want to be questioned. They do not need to use force or jail journalists; intimidation works through surveillance by state agencies, legal harassment, and financial pressure, such as control over advertising. We have also seen mobs mobilised against the media in the post-uprising period," said Saiful Islam Chowdhury.

## Lively debate

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Optimism persisted as Prime Minister Tarique Rahman acknowledged several points raised by the opposition leader and urged cooperation.  
The opposition leader, in turn, committed to assist in positive government initiatives. In his concluding speech, the prime minister stressed that solutions to national problems must be found through dialogue with the opposition, and stability in parliament is essential for Bangladesh's progress.  
His remark — that if either the ruling party or the opposition fails, then Bangladesh itself and the parliament will fail — gave rise to hope for an effective House.  
As the parliament did not ratify several key ordinances issued by the interim government, 23 (some of them key to genuine reforms) lost validity. These included provisions for judicial independence, a stronger Human Rights Commission, prevention of enforced disappearances, an empowered Anti-Corruption Commission, and establishing a police commission.  
While this drew strong criticism both within and outside the parliament for weakening institutions and betraying public expectations, cabinet members pledged that they would return with stronger bills for these reforms later.  
Constitutional reform remains a flashpoint. The BNP's reluctance to form a constitutional reform council or chart a clear reform path has deepened uncertainty around the July charter. While the government avoided convening the council as mandated by the July National Charter Implementation Order, it instead proposed a special parliamentary committee to amend the constitution. The opposition, however, demanded time to decide on joining, insisting on broader reforms.  
The opposition staged four walkouts — protesting against President

Mohammed Shahabuddin's opening address, parliament's failure to provide a resolution on adjournment motions, and the passage of what they termed "anti-people" bills. However, they returned to the House each time, which can only be seen as their commitment to the parliamentary process. The opposition's proposal for a fuel committee — accepted by the government — was a rare example of tolerance from the treasury bench.  
Still, some government decisions, such as sanctioning "MP office" at upazila parishads (described as "sitting places"), drew criticism for undermining local government.  
With 220 first-time MPs — the leader of the House as well as the opposition leader — the parliament was wont to witness procedural lapses, which it did aptly.  
Lawmakers were often not provided with bills in time and sometimes received them barely an hour before debate, making proper review impossible.  
On several occasions cabinet members fumbled while presenting bills, opposition MPs failed to engage meaningfully, and the unusual practice of allowing debate after passage of a bill broke the rhythm of parliamentary work.  
On several instances, the chief whip's interventions in minor procedural matters — issues that could have been easily conveyed through parliamentary staff — irked many, said parliament officials.  
On at least two occasions when the prime minister was not present, ruling party MPs were noticeably missing, including several who were scheduled to speak. The chief whip candidly admitted that treasury bench members were reluctant to speak without the audience of the prime minister, a trend that could only reinforce the advice that parties must rise above their old habits to lay a solid foundation of the parliament as an institution.

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WOMEN, CHILDREN ABUSE CASES

## 15 districts see zero convictions

SC-BRAC study flags stark regional disparity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although the law mandates disposal within 180 working days after investigation and trial, the average duration of a case in Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunals stands at 1,370 days – approximately 3.7 years – according to a joint study by the Bangladesh Supreme Court and BRAC.

The study also found that victims endure a grueling judicial process, with each case scheduled for hearing an average of 22 times before a verdict is delivered.

The findings were presented yesterday at a consultation titled "Procedural Hurdles in Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunals" at the BRAC Centre in Dhaka's Mohakhali, organised by BRAC's Social Empowerment and Legal Protection (SELP) programme.

Analysing 4,040 cases across 46 tribunals in 32 districts between January and June 2025, the study paints a bleak picture of the justice system, with an overall conviction rate of just 3 percent.

Even more concerning is the regional disparity, with 15 districts recording zero convictions during the study period.

The report noted that while 70 percent of the accused are acquitted, a further 13 percent of cases end in compromise, often due to social pressure and the absence of a witness protection law.

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**The Women and Children Repression Prevention (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 has reduced the statutory timeframe for case disposal from 180 to 90 days, without addressing the persistent challenges and underlying procedural constraints.**



Prime Minister and BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman speaks at a rally in the capital's Nayapaltan, while Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and opposition leader Shafiqur Rahman addresses a gathering near Baitul Mukarram on Friday, marking International Labour Day. Labour groups, including BLC and Awaj Foundation, in a procession at Keraniganj, place demands for fair wages, safe workplaces, extended maternity leave, trade union rights, and enforcement of ILO Convention 190.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN, STAR

## The BNP govt pursuing 'US First' policy

Says Anu Muhammad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP government is pursuing an "America First" policy while paying lip service to its "Bangladesh First" motto, said economist Anu Muhammad yesterday.

He questioned the government's motives for implementing the former interim government's agreements with the US "without any parliamentary debate".

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## Reserved seat MPs take oath today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The oath-taking ceremony for the newly-elected MPs for the reserved women's seats in the 13th Jatiya Sangsad will be held today.

The ceremony will take place at the oath-taking room of Jatiya Sangsad at 9:00pm, the parliament secretariat said in a release yesterday.

The Election Commission on April 30 published a gazette declaring 49 lawmakers elected unopposed to the reserved women's seats in the 13th parliament.

According to the gazette, 36 MPs were elected from the BNP-led alliance, 12 from the Jamaat-led alliance, and one as an independent.

The BNP alliance MPs are Selima Rahman, Shirin Sultana, Rasheda Begum Hira, Rehana

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## Nusrat's nomination valid: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday declared the nomination paper of Nusrat Tabassum, joint convener of the National Citizen Party, valid for a reserved women's seat in the 13th National Parliament under the Jamaat-e-Islami-led H party alliance.

Confirming the development, Returning Officer and Election Commission Joint Secretary Md Moin Uddin Khan told The Daily Star yesterday that Nusrat's nomination paper was scrutinised at 11:00am and subsequently declared valid.

"Her [Nusrat's] nomination will be placed before the Election



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## Improved, real-time fact-checking must to curb misinfo

Speakers tell programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Misinformation and rumours in Bangladesh are no longer merely online falsehoods but are increasingly being used as political and commercial tools from social media to the streets and then into mainstream media and academics, said media experts and policymakers yesterday.

They made the remarks at a programme titled "Rumours and Misinformation in the Media: Who is the Victim? Who is the Predator?", organised by the Press Institute Bangladesh.

"Fake news, disinformation and rumours should not be treated as random falsehoods. These are now highly political tools," said Prof A Al Mamun of Rajshahi University's Department of Mass Communication and Journalism.

He termed it alarming as the world is witnessing the rise of fascist and autocratic regimes, along with right-wing politics.

In Bangladesh, the reality of the last two years showed a positive correlation between right-wingers and rumours, misinformation and disinformation, Prof Mamun said.

He also said false information can move from social media to the streets and then enter mainstream media, helping create a wider

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## Free police stations from middlemen

Salahuddin orders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday directed law enforcement agencies to eliminate middlemen from police stations across the country, including those under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

He issued the directive during a surprise visit to Ramna Model Police Station in Dhaka.

In a 10 minute-29-second video of the minister's visit sent by the Home Ministry, he was seen entering directly into the room of the officer-in-charge (OC) during the inspection. There, he asked those present about their identities and the reasons

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Vehicles ply along the Mirhajirbag road in the capital's Jatrabari area, which remains damaged due to long-neglected maintenance. The state of the road worsens, especially after rainfall, causing delays and sufferings to everyday commuters. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



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## Former MP Moslem Uddin dies at 88

UNB, Dhaka

Former five-time lawmaker from Mymensingh-6 (Fulbaria) and Awami League leader Advocate Moslem Uddin died yesterday while undergoing treatment at Japan-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital in Dhaka. He was 88.

Family members said he had been admitted with age-related complications and passed away around 11:30am.

Moslem Uddin was president of Fulbaria upazila Awami League, a former member of the Constituent Assembly, and a former president of the Mymensingh District Lawyers' Association.

He was elected MP from Mymensingh-6 as an Awami League candidate in 1986, 1996, 2008, 2014 and 2018.

He is survived by three sons, two daughters, and numerous relatives.

His son, Imdadul Haque Selim, said the first namaz-e-janaza will be held at Taqwa Mosque in Dhanmondi after Zohr prayers today.

Other janazas will be held at 10:00am at Mymensingh District Bar Association, 3:00pm at Fulbaria Government High School ground, and 5:00pm at Alhaji Md Moslem Uddin Orphanage ground.

He will be laid to rest at his family graveyard in his ancestral home in Newgi Kushmail.

## Shanti Rani Sarkar passes away

CITY DESK

Shanti Rani Sarkar, elder sister of Anil Chandra Nath FCA, senior partner of Basu Banerjee Nath & Co Chartered Accountants, passed away at her home in Netrakona on Thursday afternoon. She was 92.

Shanti Rani was a teacher at a government primary school, said a press release. She is survived by four sons, four daughters, grandchildren, and a host of relatives and well-wishers.

জমি বিক্রয়  
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## The BNP govt

FROM PAGE 3

Anu Muhammad, also a leader of the Democratic Rights Committee, made the remarks at a discussion titled "Two and a Half Months of the BNP Government: Review, Concerns and Demands" at the Dhaka Reporters Unity.

During the event, which he chaired, the committee placed a 13-point demand.

"Tarique Rahman says 'Bangladesh First', but the agreements signed with the US show that the government is operating on an 'America First' policy," he said.

He alleged that deals contrary to national interests – such as importing LNG, purchasing aircraft, and granting port access – were made with the US, bypassing state entities like Petrobangla and Biman.

"Instead of punishing those involved, like Khalilur Rahman, the current elected government has rewarded them with greater responsibilities," Anu Muhammad observed.

Criticising the government's energy policies, the economist said that rather than boosting national capacity, the government is amending Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) to "favour" foreign companies under the influence of corporate lobbyists.

Recalling the historic 2006 Phulbari agreement, he noted that despite a pact to ban open pit mining, the government is again leaning towards coal extraction.

He demanded 100 percent state ownership of oil and gas exploration.

To radically change the education and healthcare sectors, Anu Muhammad proposed a simple, cost-free solution.

"If it is made mandatory for the children of the president, prime minister, ministers, MPs, and government officials to study in public educational institutions and receive treatment at government hospitals, these two sectors will see massive positive changes overnight. We don't need foreign loans for this," he added.

Speaking at the event, writer and researcher Altaf Parvez expressed disappointment over the government's handling of international relations, particularly with India.

He said despite improved bilateral ties, key issues like border killings and the renewal of the Ganges Water Treaty remain unresolved.

He alleged that although the BNP pledged to implement the July Charter in its manifesto, it later declined to join the constitutional reform council, effectively stalling

the process.

Raising concerns over recent economic decisions, Altaf criticised an ordinance allowing banks to return to their original shareholders, including individuals accused of corruption and money laundering.

Dhaka University Professor Samina Luthfa said campuses have increasingly become centres of political control rather than academic excellence.

"Even when one student organisation's influence declined, another quickly replaced it, perpetuating the cycle of political occupation," she observed. This environment fostered organised violence that later became popularly known as "mob rule", she added.

Despite repeated calls over the past 21 months, no education reform commission has been formed, Samina also said.

Lawyers Jyotirmoy Barua and Manjur Al Matin and DU Assistant Professor Moshahida Sultana Ritu also addressed the event.

During the event, the committee placed a 13-point demand.

Committee member Sajib Tanvir and Democratic Students Council president Sayedul Haque Nishan read out a concept paper outlining the demands.

The demands include speedy trials for those responsible for the July killings, mob violence, murders, vandalism, and arson; implementing necessary democratic reforms across all sectors as pledged; taking immediate measures to stop attacks on religious worship places, shrines, archaeological sites, institutions, and homes; bringing the perpetrators to justice; taking necessary steps to check the price hike of daily essentials; announcing a national minimum wage; forming commissions to ensure a farmer-friendly agricultural system; establishing a uniform education system; initiating reforms to establish healthcare as a constitutional right; ensuring completely free medical services at public hospitals; and announcing a roadmap for the withdrawal of military rule in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to foster a democratic environment; ensuring equal rights for women regarding inherited property and equal pay for equal work; forming a specialised cell to prevent human trafficking and the oppression of expatriates; publishing all international agreements signed with foreign nations and blocs; and taking effective steps to cancel treaties that go against public interests.

## Reserved seat

FROM PAGE 3

Akter Ranu, Newaz Halima Arly, Mosammat Farida Yasmin, Bilkis Islam, Shakila Farzana, Helen Jerin Khan, Nilufar Chowdhury Moni, Nipun Roy Chowdhury, Zeeba Amina Khan, Mahmuda Habiba, Sabira Sultana, Sunmila Jabrin, Sanjida Islam Tulee, Sultana Ahmed, Fahmida Haque, Anna Minj, Subarna Shikdar, Shamim Ara Begum Swapna, Shammi Akter, Ferdousi Ahmed, Bithika Binte Hossain, Suraiya Jerin, Mansura Akter, Jahrat Adib Chowdhury, Momtaz Alam, Fahima Nasrin, Arifa Sultana, Sanjida Yasmin, Shawkat Ara Akter, Madhabi Marma, Selina Sultana, Nadia Pathan Papon, and Rezeka Sultana. Jamaat-e-Islami's MPs are Nurunnisa Siddika, Marzia Begum, Sabikun Nahar Munni, Mardia Momtaz, Nazmun Nahar Nilu, Mahfuza Hannan, Sajeda Samad, Shamsunnahar Begum, and Rokeya Begum, mother of July martyr Jabir Ibrahim.

The other MPs from the II-party alliance partners are Mahmuda Alam Mitu of NCP, Tasmia Pradhan of Japga, and Mahbuba Hakim of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis.

The independent MP is Sultana Jasmin.

A total of 53 aspirants submitted nomination papers, but four were rejected during scrutiny.

On April 8, the EC announced the election schedule for the reserved women's seats. The deadline for submitting nomination papers for the 50 reserved women's seats was April 21.

Free police

FROM PAGE 3

for coming to the police station.

He later inspected the duty officers' room, lock-up and other activities; reviewed the overall environment; spoke with the OC and other on-duty police personnel; enquired about their working conditions; and listened to their concerns.

"If anyone takes advantage of the police station using the name of BNP or any party, the responsibility will be yours," he told the OC.

S a l a h u d d i n stressed integrity and professionalism and instructed police members to provide services to the public with honesty, fairness, and sincerity.

He warned of strict action if any police official or member is found guilty of negligence or corruption.

## Improved, real-time fact-checking

FROM PAGE 3

political reality, often provoking anger and feeding hate-driven politics.

Dr Zahed Ur Rahman, the prime minister's adviser on information and broadcasting, said the crisis had become more difficult with AI and Bangladesh's low media and digital literacy.

"Fake news is a crime," Zahed said, adding that the government wanted to act against specific offences to convince the media and public.

UNESCO representative to Bangladesh Susan Vize said misinformation, disinformation and malinformation could not simply be regulated away, adding that fact-checking must improve, be available to journalists, and work in real time.

She stressed capacity building for journalists on biases, fact-checking, AI, algorithms and information integrity.

PIB Director General

Faruk Wasif said online behaviour is shaped by algorithms owned by big corporate platforms.

"The main victim is not only the people but also the media industry, as they are losing credibility and people are leaving them in attraction of social media hype," he said.

Faruk also said that while people are thrown into "an ocean of information", many have a limited capacity to distinguish truth from falsehood.

Mamunur Rashid, associate professor at Jahangirnagar University and consultant at Bangladesh Computer Council, said mainstream and social media operate in a blended environment, where users are both consumers and producers of content.

He said Rumor Scanner's national category from January 2023 to March 2024 showed 925 cases, with AI-generated content being the largest category

and political figures being the main targets in the dataset, followed by government institutions.

Mamunur also said while misinformation production has a correlation with monetisation, political agenda may remain even if monetisation is excluded.

Citing the Reuters Institute's 2025 report, Nazia Afrin Monami, adjunct faculty at ULAB, said 58 percent of people think it is harder to separate truth from falsehood online, while platforms reward anger, fear and excitement, making truth compete with provocative falsehoods.

A book titled "Shikari Sangbadikota" (Predatory Journalism), written by Prof A Al Mamun and Kazi Mamun, both teachers at RU's Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, was also unveiled at the programme, moderated by PIB instructor Sahanowar Sayd Shahin.

## 15 districts see zero convictions

FROM PAGE 3

Key barriers include the absence of complainants and witnesses, frequent adjournments, delays in investigation, weak evidentiary systems, and a lack of witness protection.

Meanwhile, the Women and Children Repression Prevention (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 has reduced the statutory timeframe for case disposal to 90 days, without addressing the persistent challenges and underlying procedural constraints.

The study recommended stricter enforcement of timelines, limiting unnecessary adjournments, ensuring accountability, timely provision of forensic and medical reports, strengthening investigative capacity, introducing performance evaluation for prosecutors, ensuring in-camera and survivor-sensitive trials, expanding support services such as legal aid, counselling and shelters, and increasing the number of tribunals in high-caseload districts.

Speaking as chief guest, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman said, "There are over 40 lakh cases pending in the country. A judge informed us that around three lakh cases fall under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, yet there are only 101 judges."

"It is extremely difficult to manage so many cases with so few judges. We must address this," he also said, adding that making

the recently passed Legal Aid Act more modern and effective remains a key challenge.

Referring to preventive measures, he said, "We have adopted two approaches. One is preventive – Legal Aid Centres have been tasked with initiating mediation before cases are filed. If disputes can be resolved through mediation, the flow of cases will reduce."

"Another initiative concerns II(C) [physical assault or injury to a wife over dowry demands] magistrates. We are observing whether this reduces or increases the tendency to file false cases. If II(C) cases can be concluded through summary trials and the backlog is reduced, we may consider expanding such alternatives. If necessary, the law can be amended."

The minister also described the judiciary as the country's most "neglected sector", noting that its total budget allocation is Tk 2,200 crore – lower than that of state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV).

He cited bureaucratic inefficiencies, noting that judges often lack authority to make even minor administrative purchases. He also noted that, in some cases, legal practitioners contribute to delays, stressing that improving the justice system requires changes in mindset, structure and capacity.

BRAC Executive Director Asif Saleh, who

chaired the session, said the state's public perception is shaped by experiences in key sectors such as education, healthcare, law enforcement and justice.

"When services in these sectors are ineffective, public trust declines," he said, adding that increasing the budget alone would not suffice without accountability, good governance and responsibility at both individual and institutional levels.

He stressed a results-driven, women- and children-friendly justice system and a "whole-of-government" approach involving police, medical professionals and legal authorities.

Saleh warned that if women, in particular, lose confidence in receiving justice, trust in the system will erode further. Restoring that trust requires reducing delays, ensuring victim-centred processes, penalising false cases, and building a safe and effective justice system, he said.

Md Monjurul Hossain, director general of the Directorate of Bangladesh Legal Aid, and Shashwatee Biplob, associate director of BRAC's SELP and Gender Justice and Diversity Programme, also spoke.

ATM Morshed Alam, legal aid and policy advocacy lead at SELP, moderated the session, while Ummeey Kulsum, consultant and former district and sessions judge, presented the research overview.

## DHAKA BAR ASSOC BNP-backed lawyers' panel sweeps polls

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-backed lawyers' panel has secured a landslide victory in the Dhaka Bar Association elections, winning all 23 posts of the executive committee for the 2026–2027 term.

According to the bar association, Anwar Zahid Bhuiyan of the Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Oikya "Blue Panel" was elected president, while Mohammad Abul Kalam Khan became general secretary.

Other elected office-bearers include Rezaul Karim Chowdhury as senior vice-president, Abul Kalam Azad as vice-president, Mohammad Anisuzzaman Anis as treasurer, Eltut Mish Saudagar Anee as senior assistant general secretary, Mahadi Hasan Jewel as assistant general secretary, Khandakar Maksudul Hasan Sabuj as library secretary, Marjia Hera as cultural secretary, Afzal Hossain Mridha as office secretary, Soheli Khan as sports secretary, ASM Feroz as social welfare secretary, and Safikul Islam as information and communication secretary.

## Nusrat

FROM PAGE 3

Commission tomorrow [today]. The commission will examine the legal aspects and decide the next course of action," he added.

Earlier on April 8, the EC declared the election schedule for the 50 reserved women's seats, with April 21 as the submission deadline for nomination papers.

On April 21, Nusrat submitted her papers to the EC's dispatch branch at 4:19pm – 19 minutes past the deadline.

Consequently, the returning officer refused to accept her submission.

Nusrat later moved the High Court. On April 27, the HC directed the EC to accept her nomination paper.

On April 29, the EC issued a circular saying that Nusrat's nomination paper was accepted and the scrutiny process was scheduled for yesterday.

PRAYER TIMING				
MAY 3				
Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-15	12-45	4-45	6-31	8-00
JAMAAT 4-50	1-15	5-00	6-35	8-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION				



## EAST WEST UNIVERSITY

Progoti Foundation for Education and Development

Permanent Sanad Holder

### INVITATION FOR TENDER

East West University (EWU) invites tenders from bona fide and interested suppliers or firms for the procurement of the following items:

- Three (3) sets computers with monitor & UPS and one (1) multimedia projector set up (including screen) and printer for the Physics Lab, Department of Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS).
- Nine (09) multimedia projector setups for Farashuddin Bhaban (FUB).
- Thirteen (13) types of laboratory instruments for the Department of Civil Engineering (Survey, Geotechnical, and Environmental Engineering Labs).
- Thirty-four (34) types of laboratory instruments for the Physics Lab, Department of MPS.
- Twenty-one (21) types of laboratory instruments for the Molecular Biology and Pharmacology Laboratory, Department of Pharmacy.
- Fourteen (14) types of laboratory instruments for existing laboratories, the Department of Pharmacy.

Detailed tender schedules, including terms and conditions, may be collected from the Finance & Accounts Department (1<sup>st</sup> Floor) until 20 May 2026, during office hours (until 3:00 PM) on working days. Tender schedules for Items 01 and 02 are also available through the e-tendering portal: <http://etender.ewubd.edu>

The non-refundable tender fee is Tk. 500.00 (Taka Five Hundred only).


Interested bidders are requested to submit their tenders by 21 May 2026 at 11:00 AM, either through the e-tendering system (as specified in the schedule) or by dropping hard copies in the tender box located at the Office of the Treasurer (Room 316, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor).

Tenders will be opened on the same day at 11:30 AM in the Conference Room (4<sup>th</sup> Floor) in the presence of bidders' representatives.

All submissions must clearly mention the item name on the envelope. Failure to comply may result in disqualification.

EWU reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders, either in whole or in part, without assigning any reason. The University's decision shall be final.

**Chief of HR & Logistics**



## Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC)

BMRC Bhaban, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212

### RESEARCH GRANTS

**FY: 2026-2027**

Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC) invites Research Projects on the following research areas: 1. Basic Medical Science 2. Epidemiology 3. Clinical and interventional studies 4. Infection prevention & Control (Including healthcare workers' protection) 5. Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) 6. Women's Health 7. Child Health 8. Social & Behavioural Science 9. Primary Health Care 10. Health Education 11. Health System & Informatics 12. Environment & Climate Change (related to human health) 13. IT & Digital Health 14. Genetics & Molecular Biology (Those selected are instructed to conduct their activities in NCMRC under terms & conditions).

Duration of the Project will be six months. The guidelines and prescribed Project Proforma-01 (Master copy & Reviewer's copy) are available at BMRC website. One (01) master copy & Three (03) Reviewer's copies of the completed Project Protocol along with a soft copy (Word document) & data bank folder are to be submitted to the undersigned from 03 May to 11 June, 12:00 Noon, 2026 (except holidays).

N.B:

- Grants will be possible to disburse only after getting funds from the government.
- If selected, Ethical approval for these projects must be obtained from National Research Ethics Committee (NREC) of BMRC by following existing rules & procedures.

**Director, BMRC**  
Tel: +88 02 222298396 | Fax: +88 02 222263820  
Email: [info@bmrcbd.org](mailto:info@bmrcbd.org) | Web: [www.bmrcbd.org](http://www.bmrcbd.org)

GD-976

## Bangladesh-US trade deal and the test of strategic autonomy



ZILLUR RAHMAN

With the emergence of the Bangladesh-US reciprocal trade agreement, there has been an evident increase in interpretations of the process in terms of Bangladesh's strategic autonomy. Where trade, geopolitics, and regulatory alignment were once distinct processes, their interconnections are now tightening, leaving Bangladesh with a critical choice in the years ahead.

The nature of the ongoing talks does not resemble that of a usual free trade agreement. Commentaries published by analysts in international policy outlets and research-based institutions, as well as official declarations by the White House, clearly show that this is an attempt to establish a framework for a reciprocal trade agreement. The latter would focus on easing selected tariffs and non-tariff barriers, increasing regulatory predictability, and fostering trade facilitation in specific areas such as garments, agriculture, technology transfer, digital trade, and intellectual property rights.

It appears that the structure of this agreement is determined by the new economic strategy adopted by the US in its dealings with the Indo-Pacific region. The American state no longer views free trade agreements as mere exchanges of products and services. Instead, it sees them as a means of setting common

standards and establishing regulatory ecosystems for the benefit of the American economy.

Consequently, the relationship between the two nations has become less asymmetrical. While the US previously supplied mainly energy, machinery, and agricultural products to the Bangladeshi market, Bangladesh has exported billions of dollars' worth of ready-made garments to the American market. However, the Office of the United States Trade Representative has repeatedly raised concerns about certain tariffs, customs clearance procedures, and non-tariff barriers in Bangladesh affecting agriculture and services. From the Bangladeshi perspective, the US continues to play a crucial role in employment-driven export growth as the country prepares to graduate from least developed country status.

The proposed reciprocal trade framework aims to address the above concerns, but not by introducing a traditional tariff-reduction scheme. Rather, it concentrates on regulatory convergence, transparency, and the facilitation of trade flows in select industries. Nevertheless, the document's structure appears to remain highly advantageous to the US and its interests across industries such as labour compliance, environmental standards, intellectual property rights, and the digital economy.

Apart from economic matters, the trade agreement has recently begun to take on a distinctly political flavour. As policy commentaries and local media analyses have highlighted, the discussion is now taking place in the context of conditional cooperation. Even though this aspect was not officially included in the talks, the list of topics discussed during the

negotiations has expanded significantly beyond the economic dimension.

The above trend raises a serious question about balancing economic cooperation with safeguarding Bangladesh's policy autonomy. In general, Bangladesh has been known for maintaining balanced relations with all its main trading partners, including the US, China, India, and Europe. However, with the advent of the contemporary era of intense geopolitical rivalry, achieving this becomes increasingly difficult, especially when economic agreements impose additional, implicit

regulations that Bangladeshi companies may find too expensive and not necessarily helpful in increasing exports.

Moreover, many doubt whether the country's negotiating position will enable it to receive meaningful concessions in politically sensitive areas such as agriculture or services. Lastly, concerns persist over whether Bangladeshi agencies and departments responsible for trade policy possess sufficient negotiation expertise to engage effectively in complex, high-stakes agreements.

While Bangladesh's ability to negotiate trade-related issues has grown significantly, it still lacks the necessary experience and institutional capabilities to draft complex deals covering sectors such as digital trade and services, and to ensure consistent policy continuity throughout the process. Think tanks in Bangladesh have repeatedly emphasised the importance of developing more sophisticated, evidence-based negotiations in this area and fostering wider public participation in them.

The geopolitical situation makes Bangladesh's position even more complicated. With the US seeking to diversify its economy and supply chains away from China, Bangladesh is becoming a potentially valuable partner for Washington. However, this places Bangladesh in an extremely complex situation, since it already has strong economic ties and infrastructure connections with China.

Thus, in the new environment, the negotiation process is turning into something much bigger than a simple trade agreement. It is becoming a way to recalibrate Bangladesh's external economic relations in a multipolar world, where economic partnerships are increasingly intertwined with the strategic interests of all actors involved.

As mentioned earlier, the central question for Bangladesh here will be how it can engage with another nation without sacrificing its ability to act independently in other areas. Dhaka's ability to accomplish this task successfully will largely determine what the future holds for Bangladesh.

Zillur Rahman is a political analyst and the president of the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS). He hosts 'Tritiyo Matra' on Channel i. His X handle is @zillur.



geopolitical obligations on the parties involved.

Parallel to the trade discussion, it has become clear that both sides are interested in establishing cooperation in defence and security-related areas. For example, logistics support and information exchange are currently under discussion, even though these aspects are not covered in the current trade agreement framework. The idea of introducing a reciprocal agreement akin to GSOMIA or ACSA agreements in Bangladesh is also gaining traction in strategic and defence policy circles.

## Why Bangladesh doesn't need to pick sides for energy security



AYESHA TARIQ

The standoff between the US and Iran on the Strait of Hormuz has settled into a form of maritime trench warfare, in which each side is betting that economic pressure will eventually persuade the other to yield. Tehran has also demanded tolls of more than a million dollars per vessel for safe passage — an innovation that risks setting a precedent for every chokepoint the world has long treated as free. The latest US naval blockade has upped the ante, resulting in a situation where neither side can agree to end this war without having to give something up. This is a classic example of a zero-sum game, preventing anyone from coming to a resolution.

The Islamabad talks ended without agreement, and the likely endgame is not a clean peace deal but a patchwork of partial deals across the major issues at stake. The current stalemate has begun to shift expectations across the world's capitals. Governments and energy ministries are no longer planning around a brief disruption; they are preparing for a war that may last considerably longer than first imagined, with the Strait remaining contested for many months. As that assumption hardens, multilateral coordination becomes the casualty. Every nation begins finding its own way, and the cooperative instruments that might have shortened the crisis are quietly set aside in favour of national contingency planning.

When we examine how countries have responded, a clear pattern emerges. NATO declined to help reopen the Strait. The most consequential development is the UAE's decision to walk out of OPEC and OPEC+ on May 1, after 59 years of membership. Although the cartel had been throttling Abu Dhabi's production levels, the deeper signal is that no multilateral framework was able to withstand the situation. Every nation is now negotiating for itself, and the UAE is simply the first to admit it openly.

The countries with capital are already adapting in defence of their own national security. Saudi Arabia is rerouting its exports through the East-West pipeline to the Red Sea, allowing Yanbu to absorb a

substantial share of what Hormuz can no longer carry. The UAE, in parallel, is pushing crude through Fujairah on the Gulf of Oman, with stated plans to reduce its Hormuz exposure from 50 percent to zero over the next three years. Beyond infrastructure, governments are drawing on strategic petroleum reserves to cushion their domestic markets, accelerating the diversification of supply contracts towards the US, Australia and the African producers, and arranging precautionary credit lines with multilateral lenders. The instinct of the prepared state has been to assume the worst and to act early. That leaves Bangladesh to fend for itself.

After many rounds of discussion in recent years about energy security and the energy transition, the structural answers are familiar enough: a strategic petroleum reserve, a more diversified renewables base, and meaningful refinery upgrades. All of these are worth pursuing, but none of them can be built during the war. The sovereignty argument is a lesson for the next decade, not a solution for the next two quarters.

The solution for this war is diplomacy, and specifically diplomacy with the Global South, where Bangladesh has both standing and unused leverage. The shape of the problem is shared by at least nine other vulnerable importers, including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Egypt, the Philippines, Kenya, Senegal, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. None of these countries holds a meaningful strategic reserve, and none of them was included in the IEA's 400-million-barrel coordinated stock release on March 11, which was restricted to OECD members. That leaves roughly 80 percent of the world's population without an emergency backstop, and no coalition has yet formed to ask for one.

The first move is the institution Bangladesh already chairs. We hold the chairmanship of BIMSTEC, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, until 2027, and the secretariat is in Dhaka. All seven member states are net energy importers, and all seven receive their crude and LNG through the same chokepoint. Yet BIMSTEC has issued no statement on the war or the blockade. Within Dhaka's authority to convene sits an emergency BIMSTEC energy ministers' meeting, focused on joint LNG procurement and a coordinated call for the Strait to be reopened. India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Thailand are all rationing energy in some form, and there is strength in numbers, so none would likely refuse the invitation.

The diplomatic ceiling is also higher

than the current narrative suggests. The Foreign Minister is presently campaigning for the presidency of the UN General Assembly, with the vote scheduled for June 2. A campaign of that nature benefits from an agenda larger than itself. A Bangladesh-led Vulnerable Importers' Caucus, asking the IMF, the IEA and the World Bank Coordination Group for a non-OECD emergency stock mechanism and concessional energy financing, is the kind of agenda that earns votes and continues to deliver well after the war ends. It positions Bangladesh as a convener of the Global South rather

for food and medicine. Bangladesh is pharmaceutically self-sufficient, and nine of its firms hold FDA and EMA approvals, which suggests that a pharma-for-petroleum arrangement could be a workable idea worth exploring.

The supplier conversations are already in motion, although they remain tactical rather than strategic. Petrobangla has secured diesel from Malaysia, Singapore and India, taken delivery of a Saudi crude cargo loaded at Yanbu via the East-West pipeline, and received a Nigerian LNG cargo at Moheshkhali on April 22. These are

60 days than any reserve we could plausibly build in five years.

What is most encouraging is that each of these moves lies well within the capacity that Bangladesh already possesses, and none of them obliges us to choose a side we cannot afford to choose. We maintain functional working relationships with Washington, Beijing, Delhi, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Tehran, which is leverage that few countries can claim, and which we have rarely priced into our foreign policy. The countries that emerged from the 1973 oil shock in better shape than they entered it were



Energy security is a lesson for the next decade, but diplomacy and unconventional ideas could see us through.

ILLUSTRATION: STAR VISUALS

than a recipient of its sympathies. The architecture for payments in non-dollar trade already exists, and Bangladesh is inside it. The Asian Clearing Union, headquartered in Tehran with members including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Iran and Sri Lanka, can clear sanction-exempt food and medical trade outside the dollar system. Sri Lanka has, in recent years, paid down Iranian oil debt with Ceylon tea, and Pakistan operates a barter framework with Iran

sensible moves made under pressure, but they do not yet amount to a framework. The UAE's exit from OPEC gives ADNOC the freedom to negotiate bilaterally on price and counter in ways it could not last month, and that window opens this week, which means Dhaka should aim to be present in Abu Dhabi soon. A Pakistan-style deferred-payment facility, structured government-to-government deals with both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, would deliver more for the government in

not the ones with the largest reserves; they were the ones that converted vulnerability into diplomacy quickly and deliberately. The instruments are already in our hands, and the question now is whether we are prepared to use them with the seriousness the moment deserves.

Ayesha Tariq, CFA is CEO and Co-Founder of MacroVisor, a Dubai-based independent macro research firm.

## Govt must walk the talk on press freedom

### Scrap provisions of laws that threaten journalists

It is concerning that Bangladesh's score in the 2026 World Press Freedom Index ranks 152nd out of 180 countries, slipping three notches from the previous year. The Reporters Without Borders (RSF), which published the annual index, has noted that journalists still face major risks, particularly from draconian laws inherited from the past. Previously, at least 296 journalists and media managers were entangled in cases linked to the July uprising as of November 1, 2025. The culture of impunity for violence against journalists, which was blatant during the 2009-2024 period, still remains a matter of concern. Therefore, on this World Press Freedom Day, and with a new elected government in power, there are justified expectations that the press will be freed from previous shackles.

Over the years, we have seen how laws have been weaponised against journalists. During the interim government, the notorious Cyber Security Act, 2023 was scrapped and replaced by the Cyber Protection Ordinance, with the promise that cases filed over freedom of speech would be dismissed. In fact, many individuals accused under the act were released on bail. However, although the ordinance eliminated some repressive clauses, it retained sections that allow police to arbitrarily detain individuals and seize and search their computers and other devices. Another section allows content to be blocked if it is deemed contrary to "national unity" or as "hurting" religious sentiments. The BNP government passed the Cyber Protection Act, which adopts the Cyber Protection Ordinance wholesale, and still criminalises the "hurting" of religious sentiments. This is a fundamental violation of freedom of speech.

Surveillance is also another major obstacle to media freedom. The home ministry has decided to allow the National Telecommunications Monitoring Centre (NTMC) to continue operating for another year, even though the interim administration had moved to abolish this much-criticised surveillance agency used by the Sheikh Hasina government to spy on and target citizens. The NTMC is supposed to be abolished and replaced with a new oversight body under the new Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2026. However, it can still carry out surveillance with minimal restraint, without adequate oversight. One of the clauses in the law allows for interception of phone calls and internet-based messages on grounds of "national security" or "emergency," without the need for a court order. For investigative journalism in particular, which heavily relies on confidential sources, this may spell disaster.

The prime minister recently assured that his government will stand by press freedom, but as long as such clauses remain that allow scope for misuse, journalists will continue to face threats. If the government is serious about its commitment to democracy, it must protect press freedom by scrapping such provisions and dismissing all false cases against journalists. For the same reason, the government must also ensure that the masterminds and perpetrators of the December 2025 attacks on *Prothom Alo* and *The Daily Star*, which had endangered the lives of close to 30 journalists and staff members of *The Daily Star*, are brought to justice.

## Whom does a city corporation work for?

### DSCC-DNCC's persistent inability to clear canals unacceptable

It was in January 2021 that the two city corporations of Dhaka took over the management and maintenance of 26 canals and 10 kilometres of box culverts from Dhaka Wasa, under whose authority the canals of our capital had become victims of clogging, pollution, and encroachment. With the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) taking over responsibility for the city's canals, we had hoped that these issues would be resolved and we would not only have healthy canals, but also clearer roads in the monsoon. But five years on, it seems that we had hoped in vain. As a recent report by *Bonik Barta* revealed, neither city corporation has fully restored a single canal in the last five years. However, they have spent hundreds of crores on drainage development and other activities during the same period.

Whether city corporations are helmed by elected officials or administrators, it is expected that they would work in the best interests of the capital and its residents. Yet, despite political power changing hands three times in Bangladesh since 2021, there has been no pause in canals and their surrounding areas being encroached by influential entities. The mismanagement of canals has become so severe that many areas near these waterways become flooded following even light rainfall. Concerningly, the clogged canals also contribute to rising dengue mosquito populations.

Residents of the capital continue to suffer the consequences of laidback city corporations' failure to manage roads, canals, etc. Yes, power has changed hands a few times. But why should that matter anyway? Are the public servants working in the DSCC and DNCC incapable of carrying out their designated work without some kind of signal from a political power? Does their sense of duty not originate from a will to do good for the residents of the capital? How is it that, despite the announcement of many canal restoration efforts over the last few years, encroachers are still grabbing these waterways unchallenged? The DSCC CEO claims that their work has been limited to cleaning canals, but the frequent waterlogging on even some main roads indicates otherwise.

The current government's nationwide canal excavation campaign has renewed our hope that the state of these crucial waterways will be improved. We urge that the capital's two city corporations are not only made to work more dedicatedly to this end, but also that they are held accountable for their failure of the last five years. With the monsoon upon us, waterlogging will only worsen. In the coming weeks, it is up to the city authorities to ensure that the capital does not become even more unliveable for its residents.

## WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

# Press freedom in a world of slopoganda and churnalism



Kamal Ahmed is consulting editor at The Daily Star. He led the Media Reform Commission under the interim government. His X handle is @ahmedkal.

KAMAL AHMED

Do you feel exhausted trying to find reliable facts about everything happening around you? As emerging digital platforms increasingly outpace legacy media, it is often frustrating to discover that a seemingly credible story, complete with high-quality video footage, turns out to be fabricated. Such content is frequently designed either to malign individuals or to advance the vested interests of particular groups. While many of these interests are political in nature, they can also serve corporate or business agendas.

Rapid technological advancement and the widespread, low-cost accessibility of artificial intelligence (AI) tools have significantly lowered the barriers to content creation. Today, almost anyone with minimal resources can become a content producer. Much of this cheap, low-quality content is now weaponised as propaganda, used by malicious actors to run disinformation and misinformation campaigns. Communication experts have coined the term "slopoganda" to describe this phenomenon. Although the word has yet to enter common vocabulary, most of us have encountered, and at times been misled by, such content. Across the spectrum—politicians from all sides, business leaders, civil society representatives, academics, and activists—there is now broad recognition of the dangers posed by slopoganda, along with growing calls for urgent measures to counter it.

Alongside this trend is another troubling form of media proliferation. A number of media outlets have emerged that show little interest in serious public-service journalism. Instead, they are used as tools to advance specific business interests, shield corruption and malpractice, or promote one-sided narratives. These outlets often rely on the unethical practice of copying and republishing press releases or producing derivative content with minimal verification or critical analysis. Experts have termed this practice "churnalism," distinguishing it from genuine journalism. In Bangladesh's already overcrowded media landscape, churnalism has become a dominant practice and is widely regarded as one of the key reasons behind the

audience's growing disengagement from legacy media.

If reading this far feels disheartening, it is important to recognise that Bangladesh is not unique in facing these challenges. The global media ecosystem is currently in a dire state, confronting levels of adversity and attack that are unprecedented in recent history.

The latest World Press Freedom Index indicates that global media freedom has fallen to its lowest level in a quarter of a century. In 25 years, the average score across the 180 countries and territories assessed has never been



FILE VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

this low. Should this come as a surprise? When self-proclaimed leaders of the free world remain conspicuously silent in the face of what many rights activists describe as "journocide" in Palestine and Lebanon by Israel, their moral authority to criticise censorship in fragile democracies or countries drifting towards autocracy becomes increasingly questionable. According to the United Nations, since the start of Israel's war on Gaza, more than 260 media professionals had been killed by December 2025. In addition, 11 Lebanese journalists were killed in their own country in connection with this conflict, as per figures compiled

and prolonged detention on questionable charges.

Further underscoring the challenges, UNESCO's World Trends Report on Freedom of Expression and Media Development (2022-2025), released ahead of this World Press Freedom Day, notes that freedom of expression worldwide has declined by 10 percent since 2012. The report describes this regression as comparable in scale to the most unstable periods of the 20th century, encompassing both world wars and the Cold War era.

According to UNESCO, several factors are driving this setback,

including the intensification of armed conflicts (61 active conflicts were recorded globally in 2024), alongside rising information manipulation and interference by malicious actors, often facilitated by AI technologies. The erosion of trust and concerns over national security also play a role. The report highlights a 48 percent increase in efforts to control or restrict media, as well as persistent violence against journalists, with 85 percent of such killings going unpunished. It also points to the growing economic fragility of independent media, linked to the concentration of more than 54 percent of global advertising revenues within digital platforms. At the same time, digital disruption and AI-driven transformations of information ecosystems are accelerating, with 40 percent of users already relying on AI to create or modify content. These pressures have contributed to a 63 percent increase in self-censorship since 2012, driven by fear of reprisals, online harassment, judicial intimidation, and economic constraints.

These adversities are not unfamiliar. Bangladesh's Media Reform Commission (MRC), formed by the interim government following the 2024 uprising, identified many of these issues during its investigations and consultations. Some of these challenges are deeply rooted and historical, while others are emerging and largely uncharted. The MRC put forward a comprehensive set of recommendations, proposing phased implementation. Notably, several of these measures could have been enacted immediately under existing laws and regulations. However, the interim government failed to take meaningful action during its tenure, resulting in a missed opportunity for reform.

Fortunately, Bangladesh witnessed a successful national election last February. This democratic transition has opened a new window of opportunity to undertake meaningful media reforms, without which democratic recovery risks faltering once again. In its election manifesto, the ruling BNP pledged to ensure full independence of the media, establish a permanent media commission to safeguard press freedom, protect journalists from attacks, and restore public trust through mechanisms of self-regulation. These commitments are critical. Without a vibrant, transparent, and accountable media ecosystem, the threats posed by slopoganda, churnalism, and other challenges will continue to undermine democratic stability and distort public discourse.

# Without real agency, reserved-seat MPs cannot serve the public

Rabeena Sultana Ananna is research associate at BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University.

Md. Abrar Hasan is program associate at BIGD, BRAC University.

RABEENA SULTANA ANANNA and MD. ABRAR HASAN

The primary goal of reserving seats in Bangladesh's parliament was to ensure women's representation and voice in parliament. But this plan failed miserably by disenfranchising citizens from choosing their preferred woman representatives.

A research study titled "Legitimacy and Leadership: Strengthening Women's Political Representation Through Electoral Reform in Bangladesh," by the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), found that since women are not elected to reserved seats by direct vote, there is a lack of public accountability which weakens their legitimacy to influence political affairs. Rather, this system promotes nepotism and becomes a tool for rewarding party loyalty.

Historically, most of the nominees for reserved seats were loyal party members or relatives of senior party leaders. They proved to be solely a symbolic representation of women in parliament, with no intention of safeguarding women's rights.

One respondent participating in the BIGD study said, "We haven't seen

who they [reserved seat MPs] are, and they did not even come here to see us. How do they become members of parliament? If they were elected, they could have a mandate to speak on our behalf."

Moreover, there is always a conflict of interest between the elected representative and the reserved-seat members. Elected representatives have always sidelined the selected women MPs in decision-making and allocating budgets for their constituencies. Despite their genuine intentions, these women MPs are unlikely to be able to contribute effectively to public welfare, even when they are highly educated, as would be the case in the 13th parliament. A former reserved seat MP from Chandpur told BIGD, "It is just an ornamental position! When I was elected, we did not have any selected constituencies to work on." She said designating a specific region or locality for reserved-seat MPs to work on would have been better. Without such a provision, ambiguity arises, exacerbating tensions between elected MPs and reserved-seat MPs over who is responsible for what in their associated constituencies.

Following the July uprising, the constitution and election reform commissions formed by the interim government, as well as some parties, had proposed the direct election of women MPs to the reserved seats. The Women's Affairs Reform Commission proposed a dual representation system

in parliament along with direct vote for reserved seats. But proposals failed to address conflicts of interest among party members at the grassroots level and in parliament. However, people from diverse age groups, occupations, classes, and genders expressed a strong desire to elect their female representatives through voting—something political parties seem unaware of or uninterested in. An elderly research participant from Savar noted that the public has to bear the expenditures of the reserved seats, although the corresponding MPs are not required to maintain public engagement.

Under the circumstances, the recently formed parliament should focus on the strategic distribution of reserved seats that reflect women's agency by establishing parameters for selecting female representatives based on their past performance in upholding women's voices in parliament.

According to the Jatiya Sangsad (Reserved Women Seats) Election Act, 2004, parties should nominate potential women candidates for reserved seats and later elect them through the MPs of respective parties. In practice, the parties decided to stick to the conventional selection process—bypassing the significant step of voting—to sustain control over nominations. Although this provision doesn't address the lack of public mandate, skipping the voting process reinforces the prioritisation of party

loyalty over any other qualification.

However, this time, parties have tried to maintain a relatively inclusive approach by nominating women beyond party members. Nominated individuals include civil society representatives, minority group members, and representatives from the survivors of the July uprising. However, existing challenges such as lack of agency and party dominance remain unaddressed. Most of the nominated candidates have—both in the ruling party and opposition—some connections to party members or some wings of the party. BNP has nominated 36 candidates, while the Jamaat-e-Islami-led alliances have nominated candidates for 13 reserved seats. Unfortunately, both have bypassed the election process and submitted the list of candidates for the exact number of proportional reserved seats they have won.

When asked about the selection process, a senior leader from the ruling party mentioned organisational capability, contributions to street politics, and expertise in parliamentary debates as screening criteria. While these qualities are expected of all members of parliament, there is still no clear distinction in the qualifications required for reserved seats. The selected women MPs must be capable of performing their duties; otherwise, the price that both the citizens and the reserved-seat MPs have been paying for this ornamental arrangement is too high to be continuously ignored.

# Ten steps to guide Bangladesh out of the energy crisis



**Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem**  
is research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and director at the CPD Power Energy Study.

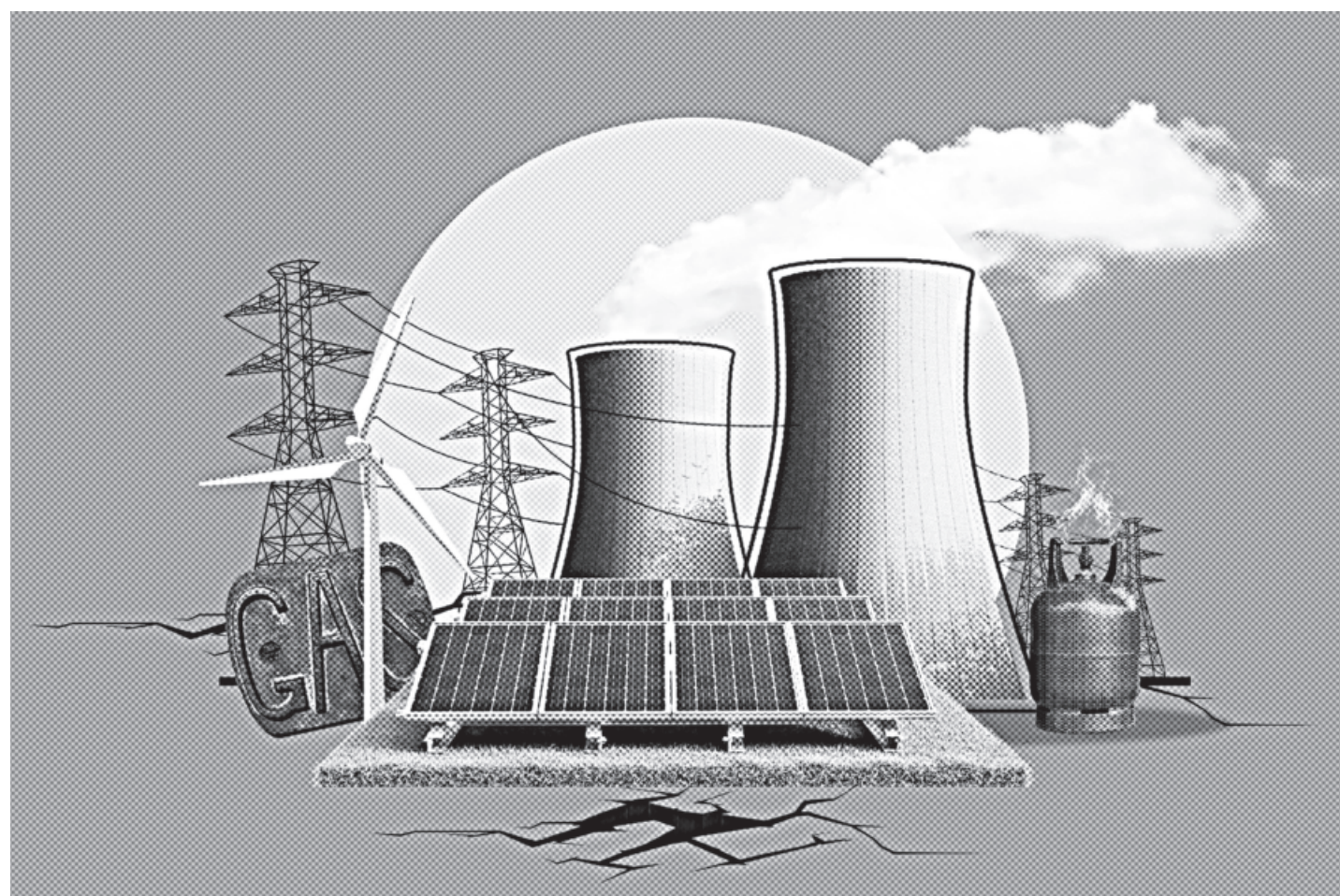
**KHONDAKER GOLAM MOAZZEM**

It's good news that a special parliamentary committee has been formed to address the energy crisis by offering recommendations on the legal, institutional, and operational issues arising from it. The committee is scheduled to hold its first meeting today (May 3). One expects it to recommend not only immediate and urgent solutions but also, more importantly, medium- to long-term solutions for a sustainable transition towards clean and renewable energy development in the country. While this committee's tenure will be for one month, it is expected to recommend follow-up and monitoring by the parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources in the coming days.

The special committee should duly acknowledge the challenge of over-dependence on the import-dependent fossil fuel supply chain. The war imposed on Iran has created cracks in the oil-dependent economies of the Middle East, and the unresolved reality of the war has put the world in such a situation that even if the war stops temporarily, the crisis will return repeatedly in the coming decades. This means the global energy system has entered a kind of permanently unstable situation. As a result, the global oil market and related energy markets such as LNG, coal, and LPG will remain unstable. Therefore, it is especially important now to emphasise energy diversification in Bangladesh.

As someone who has worked in the power and energy sector, I would like to recommend the following.

- 1. Gradually reduce subsidies in the power and energy sector**  
Government is under pressure to reduce the subsidy payment for the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), BPC (Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation), Rupantarika Praktirik Gas Company Limited (RPGCL), and Petrobangla. However, subsidies should not be reduced only through the adjustment of tariffs on the consumer's end. Rather, BPC's pricing policy should be revised to make it market-based. Much of the demand for subsidies exists due to the faulty pricing for independent power producers (IPPs) in the power sector. Hence, the government should not go for the renewal of IPPs after the contractual period is over.
- 2. Introduce a real-time monitoring system**  
From fuel import to filling stations, in the five to seven stages of the distribution process, widespread leakages and corruption have been exposed during the recent crisis. Therefore, it is very important to establish a



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

real-time digital monitoring system from import to unloading at the depot, from the depot to the filling station, and from the filling station to consumers. Allocation should be made in the next national budget to establish this system. India and Pakistan have made significant progress using such digital monitoring systems.

- 3. Allocate increased expenditure for energy imports**  
Even if the US-Iran war is over soon, it may take more than one year for global energy prices to stabilise and return to pre-war prices. Therefore, the usual allocation for energy imports by the government will not be sufficient this time. At least 50 percent higher allocation should be made for energy imports in the next fiscal year. However, to obtain this additional funding, low-interest loans from the World Bank and the IMF may be helpful for the government. But the special committee should recommend against taking high-interest loans from the international market.

- 4. Urgently connect discovered gas to the national grid**  
Gas found in Bhola, plus gas available in previously used residual gas wells, and gas obtained through accelerated exploration should be urgently transmitted to the national grid. It is necessary to prioritise gas well drilling, Petrobangla or Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited (BAPEX) should declare

as part of a medium- to long-term strategy.

- 6. Eastern Refinery expansion is unnecessary**  
Modernisation of the existing infrastructure of Eastern Refinery is sufficient. The argument for expanding it to increase "strategic reserves" is not acceptable. Such reserves will increase import dependency further in the long run. Therefore, the committee should recommend the modernisation of the existing

sector. If 30 percent of vehicles, especially buses, trucks, and lorries, can be converted to electric vehicles by 2030, the government could reduce diesel use by 8.3 lakh tonnes. Such an amount in foreign currency savings will reduce pressure on the balance of payment and foreign exchange reserve. To achieve this, the committee should advise converting all government vehicles to EVs, as well as reducing duties on all EV vehicles.

- 9. Urgently declare a plan to implement 10,000 MW of renewable energy**  
The current government has announced a plan to generate 10,000 megawatts (MW) of solar electricity by 2030. This would be a positive move. The committee should recommend announcing the government's plan to achieve this target and monitoring it through the parliamentary standing committee. This may include accelerating the implementation of the existing 3,000 MW national rooftop solar programme, completing the tender process for the 5,000 MW large-scale solar projects, and setting timelines for quick implementation by the private sector. In addition, the committee should recommend completing the review of the cancelled letters of intent (LOIs) of the 31 renewable projects as per the recent office order and quickly issue implementation orders. In this case, for newly announced Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), alternative acceptable conditions may be included instead of the "guarantee clause" to attract private sector investment.

- 10. Accelerate foreign investment in the renewable sector**  
Ensure easy one-stop service for foreign investors, introduce online-based payment and exchange of documents and information with different agencies and ensure predictability in receiving specific services on time—both in terms of quality and price. The committee should advise relevant agencies to undertake specific activities to be reported to the parliamentary standing committee. The agencies include Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), BPDB, Sustainable And Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA), Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board (BREB), Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA), Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA), Department of Fire Service and Civil Defence (FSCD), Department of Environment (DoE), Registrar of Joint Stock Companies And Firms (RJSC), Petrobangla, Titas, city corporations, etc.

ERL infrastructure, instead of constructing another unit.

- 7. Reduce diesel use and increase solar irrigation in agriculture**  
The 13 lakh diesel-powered irrigation pumps currently in use in the country can easily be converted to solar-powered irrigation pumps. Due to insufficient funding, this sector is progressing slowly. Conversion to solar power will help the government reduce 12-13 percent diesel usage and thereby reduce diesel imports by three lakh tonnes. Such foreign currency savings will reduce pressure on the balance of payments and foreign exchange reserves. The committee should recommend necessary investment by the government, multilateral development banks (MDBs), and international financial institutions (IFIs) funds in this transformative journey.

- 8. Introduce EV-based vehicles instead of diesel**  
About 66 percent of the diesel used in the country is consumed by the transport

this as an emergency. Besides, Tengratila gas well can be drilled now since the Niko case is over. Petrobangla should also retender the exploration of 24 offshore gas blocks after revising the tender documents as necessary, taking into account terms that would attract gas exploration companies.

- 5. Suspend construction of LNG-based infrastructure**  
A major challenge in meeting Bangladesh's current energy costs is expensive LNG imports, leading to permanently high government expenditure. Unfortunately, multinational banking corporations are highly interested in providing bank guarantees and bank loans for LNG imports and related infrastructure development. These expensive infrastructures are creating long-term liabilities and will continue to do so. In contrast, moving towards more accessible and sustainable renewable energy will not create such long-term liabilities. Therefore, the committee should discourage LNG imports and the development of LNG-related infrastructure

## An open letter to Limon and Bristy



**BLOWIN' IN THE WIND**

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

**SHAMSAAD MORTUZA**

Limon and Bristy, The attic of my thoughts is peopled by figures whom I never thought would gather to murmur in my head; these are the voices of people who should never have to meet like this.

In the corner, the brother who encouraged you, Bristy, "the lazy one" in your own words, is filled with deep regrets. He is the one who pushed you to apply for the scholarship in the US. And you thought it was in your "rizz" to move up to the First World and prove yourself as an engineer. And then, there are Limon's parents. You, Limon, told them not to disturb you in the final hours of your thesis submission. You were just months away from adding the doctorate title before your name. The parents knew of your courtship with Bristy. You really liked that girl: decent and talented. The names, Limon and Bristy, could have been on a wedding card. Now you have become a headline.

Oh, is it the teacher on the other side of my head? He was so proud of your achievements. Coming from a rural part of the country and making it to a well-known US university is no mean feat. How many times have you cited them as role models? How many times have you wished the country had the labs and resources to retain the brain? How many times have you gloated about the success of your students as your own? They almost endorsed your belief that the country has the right talent, and they can prove themselves anywhere in the world only if they are provided

with the proper learning environment. A teacher speaks next, not in grief alone, but in recognition. We push our students not because the world is kind but because we hope merit might negotiate with cruelty. We tell them to read more, think harder, and go further. We imagine them returning as scholars, as mentors, as the proof that effort matters. You did everything that was asked of you—and more. You crossed that fragile threshold from undergraduate uncertainty to doctoral promise. You stood, quite literally, on the steps of success. That is where the world failed you.

Another teacher in Tampa, Florida looks at the empty lab desks and sighs. They were so close to having it all: the wonderful American Dream. Their research, their dedication impressed you. Their zest for life, too. Now they are just obituaries and memories. All eyes are now on the courtroom, with the expectation that justice would be done.

These are the students who hosted Bangladesh nights. You shared meals and late-night addas. Bristy, do they know that you have the rare talent of singing while capping a cup? On Facebook, the videos of your "cup music" are still liked by thousands. Absurd as it may seem, you are not there to thank your fans and followers. Then again, you are way beyond the fallacy of fandom. You showed them how little things can turn big. An empty paper cup filled with music can serve thousands of music connoisseurs. You turned a little country into big news.

You showed them that being "from nowhere" could also mean being from everywhere.

Hisham, Hisham, Hisham—you monster! What are you doing among humans? You are like the selfish giant who could not withstand that the children played in his garden. You are similar to the ancient sailor who killed an innocent bird without a reason. So, what was it? Your roommate complained about your obnoxious behaviour. Is that a crime enough

Limon and Bristy came from a country that boasts the word "poroshrikatorota," a close translation of which can be "schadenfreude." They were running away from the jealousy of mean-minded people. They wanted to embrace the greatness of the country that had been a beacon of freedom for 250 years. Oh Hisham, did you know what King Charles said about America: "This land of opportunities has nourished some of humanity's greatest

Your resentment and envy, a flicker of schadenfreude, surface when you say, "They had everything. They were happy." And you had nothing. And now you will be nothing. If Edgar Allan Poe were to write of you, he would have lingered on your tell-tale heart. If Fyodor Dostoevsky were to respond, he would descend into the moral maze to gauge the collateral damage of evil. Still there would be no closure, no easy consolation.

Your crime is incomprehensible even to the machine that you used to frame. Did you do it deliberately to frame the machine? Surely, you lack a heart in that body that dismembered your own roommate. You wrote prompts to cover up your crime. Language can be used as a veil to conceal intentions, agendas, or prejudices. But no system, human or artificial, can "cover up" violence without first reflecting the world that produces it. The machine is a fast learner. Your toxicity has fed the archive. You have vitiated a system that is outpacing us in our thoughts.

So, what remains? Limon's decomposed body was discovered by a bridge over troubled waters. Bristy, like her name, has dropped and faded. What remains is a reckoning. Two lives lost. Their stories will soon be shelved to make room for the new gossip in town. What remains is a question directed at institutions: universities, states, and communities: What does it mean to invite students into a promise of mobility and not guarantee their safety? What remains is a demand that your story not be reduced to a statistic or a cautionary footnote. What remains is a sticky memory, stubborn enough to not go away. An unprinted thesis. An empty cup devoid of music.

The people in my head ask one simple question. Can we use these tragic deaths as a means to examine not only the violence that ended these lives but also the structures that made such violence possible? A structure that hates happiness in others?



VISUAL: MARZANA TASNIM

to slay a fellow human being and his friend? Your family had a stay order against you. Your violent behaviour was already recorded. How could you be allowed to stay in an off-campus student accommodation? You are a school dropout. Did you watch Limon and Bristy from a shadowy distance? Did their success cause you pain? Were you sad (Schaden) to see them joyful (Freude)? Hisham, the irony is,

minds from the industrial age to the space age." Yes, Limon and Bristy responded to that call.

Yet you had different ideas. You asked ChatGPT how to get away with murder. You could have just watched the ABC series since you were that lonely. You must truly be a sick person to think your unhappiness must be spread to mar other people's happiness.

## Shakib Khan-starrer 'Rockstar' unveils first animated teaser

The makers of *Rockstar* have unveiled an animated promotional project and announced that the film's teaser will be released on May 5.

Sharing the announcement, the team captioned the project: "One story that will change everything." The animated video features a cheering crowd celebrating a rockstar, who is introduced with "Mega Star" written across his sunglasses. The sequence shows his character in high-energy moments labelled "Warm up", culminating in a shot of him standing on a car with the caption, "Don't blink, it's just a warm up."

The film is directed by Azman Rusho and produced by Sun Motions Pictures Limited. It stars Shakib Khan in the lead role as the Rockstar, alongside Sabila Nur and Tangia Zaman Methila.



# 'Becoming stale kills careers'

Pritom Hasan discusses break from playback



SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

After a string of successful film scores that brought Pritom Hasan fame beyond his years, the artiste recently announced that he would step back from playback singing for the time being. Now, fresh off the release of *2nd Nayok*, a collaboration with Nuhash Humayun, the indomitable composer-turned-actor looks to return to his roots as the poster boy of Bangla independent hits.

**You were arguably at the peak of your popularity when you stepped back from making music for films. What led to that?**

I was oscillating back and forth about it for a while, especially since independent work has always been at the core of my musicianship. Many of the fans who have supported me from the onset voiced that they miss the style of my 2023 EP (Extended Play).



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

**Was there a specific moment that made you step back?**

Not a specific moment per se. However, I knew that being cornered into one specific niche can get stale and even kill careers. I wouldn't say that I was typecast, but I didn't want to be "instructed" to do a particular kind of music. That's just not my jam.

**'2nd Nayok' really comes into its own with its music video. How did you and Nuhash conceive this idea?**

If you really look into it, the concept is about being sidelined—a feeling that I'm sure a lot of people are familiar with. The relationship between Nuhash and me is that of close friends, so whenever we are supposed to casually hang out, we end up talking about work. This song came out of one of those meetings.

**The casting was also inspired.**

It was! We wanted a fresh face for the video, and Malaika fit the bill perfectly. I am a huge fan of Mir Rabby and his on-screen presence, so it was a no-brainer for us to cast him in the video.

**A vacuum will be felt because of your absence in films. Who can take up your mantle?**

(Laughs) There's more than enough talent in our industry! G M Ashraf is already doing an amazing job. Jahid Nirob has been prodigal for a long time. Ankon Kumar and his mellifluous voice are assets for Bangladesh, and we need to look after him. Personally, I want more indie musicians to come forward and show their mettle.



## Ashes releases long-awaited track 'Feriwala'

After nearly a decade of anticipation, Bangladeshi band Ashes has released its new track *Feriwala*, the fourth song from its album *Bivrom*. Written and composed by frontman Zunayed Evan, the song dropped Thursday night alongside a music video shot in Canada and at Kaptai Lake in Rangamati.

The track has a long history, first teased in 2016 and later shared as a demo in 2019, sparking years of fan curiosity. Evan said the band did not expect such a delay, noting the overwhelming response from listeners.

With its official release, fans' long wait has finally ended. Ashes' current lineup features Evan, Sultan Rafsan Khan, Wahid Uz Zaman Turjo, Adnan Bin Zaman and Tawfiq Ahmed Bijoy.

## Princess Diana docuseries to feature unheard recordings



A new documentary series centred on the life of Princess Diana is in development, with producers promising an intimate portrait told largely in her own voice.

Titled *Diana: The Unheard Truth*, the three-part series is scheduled for release in 2027, marking 30 years since Diana's death in a Paris car crash. The project is based on previously unreleased audio recordings of conversations between Diana and her confidante, surgeon James Colthurst. The tapes were originally used as source material for *Diana: Her True Story* by Andrew Morton. The series will explore her life, marriage to King Charles III, and legacy, offering fresh insight into one of the most scrutinised figures in modern history.

# NEWS

## Mothers left to choose

FROM PAGE 12 performed nearly 7.3 times more unpaid care work than men.

For mothers of children with disabilities, the strain can be overwhelming. Sazia Jainak (not her real name), a former employee of a private company, quit her job after her child was diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental disorder. Her employers didn't offer any support.

Ashrafunnahar Mishti, executive director of the Women with Disabilities and Development Foundation (WDDF), said, "It is not just about leaving a job; in many cases, it leads to the abandonment of the mother."

"Families break apart, divorces happen, and many women return to their parental homes or live in isolation, as relatives are unwilling to share caregiving responsibilities."

She pointed out that a widespread "knowledge deficit" regarding disability care has left mothers as sole caregivers, making sustained employment physically and mentally unfeasible.

Rupali Chowdhury, managing director of Berger Paints Bangladesh Ltd, sees such exits of mid-career women as a crisis in the "professional pipeline."

"Just when a woman is ready for leadership, motherhood demands attention. With nuclear families and limited childcare, many feel forced to sacrifice their professional identities."

This systemic "leak" reinforces bias. "When employers saw mid-level women leave jobs, they became reluctant to hire women at all. They assumed that female employees would eventually quit. So, women started losing at the very first step—recruitment."

The "leak" also carries serious economic consequences, reflecting a major loss of national resources.

Sayama Haque Bidisha, pro-vice chancellor at Dhaka University, noted that women with children under five were far less likely to participate in the labour force than those without young children.

When a mid-career woman exits the workforce or faces stagnation, the state loses the return on its investment in her education, particularly in high-cost fields, she said.

"If a doctor or a professional quits because of a lack of safe childcare, society loses the value of her service."

In cases of forced stagnation, many women either downshift careers, shift to remote work, or leave field roles due to a lack of reliable childcare support, said Bidisha, a professor of economics at DU.

Referring to a recent BBS survey, she said, "This loss is reflected in leadership gaps—less than 7 percent of managerial roles in Bangladesh are currently held by women. They excelled in education, but that did not translate into leadership. We will continue losing talent at its peak unless care burdens are addressed."

To plug the leak, experts call for a radical transformation of the "care economy" which encompasses care work—paid and unpaid, direct and indirect—delivered through public and private sectors, non-profit organisations and households.

A 2024 ILO report said that allocating 3.99 percent of GDP to care sectors could generate approximately seven million new jobs in Bangladesh by 2035—91 percent of which would be

formal roles for women.

UN Women Country Representative Gitanjali Singh asserted that investing in care systems would be a "triple win" for women, society, and the economy.

"As women's time poverty reduces, more women enter and stay in the labour market, while investments in the care sector generate long-term dividends for human development, health, reduced poverty, and well-being of societies," she noted.

Rupali proposes turning caregiving into a small business sector.

"Every office cannot afford a daycare. We need community-based, certified daycare centres for people with different budgets. If these services become available in hubs like Motijheel or Gulshan, middle-class professionals could afford quality care that fits their income."

Bidisha echoed the same view and urged the introduction of regulated domestic caregiving services to replace the current expensive, informal, and unreliable system.

Ashrafunnahar suggested government support for mothers whose children require specialised care.

"The state is depriving both the mother and the child of their rights by failing to provide inclusive childcare," she said.

When contacted, Women and Children Affairs Minister Abu Zafar Md Zahid Hossain said the government plans to gradually expand childcare and caregiving services across the country to support working parents.

The initiative will initially target Dhaka and divisional headquarters, focusing on institutional facilities.

## Interim govt ignored

FROM PAGE 12 "It was very frustrating," Unicef Representative to Bangladesh Rana Flowers told Science.org—a scientific research, technology and medical news site of the eponymous journal.

"For God's sake... don't do this," she recalled telling the interim government's health adviser Nurjahan Begum, who did not respond to Science's questions.

The tender process became caught in bureaucratic delays, causing vaccine supplies to run out and routine immunisation to stall.

A supplemental MR campaign, postponed from 2024 to 2025 because of unrest, was eventually cancelled. By late March, government data showed only 59 percent of eligible children had received measles vaccines in 2025. The figures were later removed from the website, Science reported.

The outbreak began in January in Rohingya refugee camps near the Myanmar border before spreading rapidly across Bangladesh. It has now reached 58 of the country's 64 districts and caused more than 21,000 hospitalisations. In an April 23 update, the World Health Organization warned of a considerable risk of spread to Myanmar and India.

Experts say vaccine gaps were compounded by malnutrition and a weak health system. Around 28 percent of Bangladeshi children under five are stunted, while missed vitamin A distribution campaigns since 2024 have further weakened immunity, said ASM Alamgir, former principal scientist at IEDCR.

Bangladesh reinstated vaccine procurement through Unicef in April and worked with WHO and Gavi to secure supplies, said Ziauddin Hyder, special assistant on health affairs to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman. Authorities launched an emergency vaccination drive on April 5 in high-risk areas, followed by a nationwide rollout on April 20. Vitamin A distribution is also set to resume.

However, Be-nazir Ahmed, former director of disease control at DGHS, warned the emergency campaign is unlikely to stop the epidemic quickly given the speed of transmission.

Many scientists cited by Science point to the interim government's procurement decision. The matter has also drawn legal scrutiny, with Supreme Court lawyer Biplob Kumar Das filing a complaint with the Anti-

Corruption Commission on April 12 over alleged corruption and vaccine procurement failures under the interim government.

Prof Sayedur Rahman, a key health adviser to the interim government, defended the shift, saying the old system relied on an emergency clause and needed to be moved to a "regular, rule-based system going forward" to "avoid questions about transparency or lead to perceptions of bias".

He did not answer follow-up questions on what went wrong but acknowledged the toll: "The loss of children to a fully preventable disease like measles is heartbreaking. It is a human tragedy, and my deepest condolences go to every family that has suffered."

Meanwhile, following the publication of the report, Prof Sayedur made a Facebook post on Friday stating that his comments given to Science magazine had been published in fragmented form, despite his written caution that excerpts could create ambiguity and lead to misunderstandings.

He explained that since the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) is a routine programme, it was considered inappropriate to rely on emergency provisions every year. An informal assessment of the international vaccine market was therefore conducted, indicating preliminary feasibility for mobilising state funds.

He added that it was important for the government to build its own capacity and reduce dependence on external sources for a long-running programme. So, the government explored procuring vaccines at competitive prices and strengthening its ability to source directly from the international market.

Given the critical importance of the matter, the interim government's health ministry sent a recommendation in November 2025 to the Advisory Council Committee on Economic Affairs. The proposal sought procurement of vaccines worth about Tk 419 crore through Unicef using the Direct Procurement Method (DPM), which was approved at the committee's scheduled meeting that month.

Prof Rahman ended the post by stressing that no vaccines under the EPI were procured using any different methods during the interim government tenure.

## Dhaka-Sylhet road

FROM PAGE 12 to land acquisition problems at 11 locations where companies were to set up site offices. There are administrative issues as well, he said.

"Now the ministry has already taken initiatives to begin the construction work," he said, expressing hope the BNP government would start soon and finish within two to three years.

"People will no longer have to suffer so much once the work is completed."

Highlighting the importance of railways, the prime minister said, "The more roads we continue to widen, the more vehicles will come onto the roads. Traffic will definitely increase."

"Therefore, we will definitely improve road communication systems, but we want to develop the railway system. You will surely be interested once the railway system between Dhaka and Sylhet is improved."

## Florida police

FROM PAGE 12 appeared to have been bound. Authorities recovered another body from a nearby waterway on April 26, which has now been confirmed as Bristy's.

The suspect was arrested days later by a SWAT team at his parents' home, and a court ordered him held without bond.

Hillsborough County Judge Logan Murphy barred Abugharbieh from contacting witnesses or the victims' families during a brief hearing in Tampa.

According to court records, Abugharbieh faces two counts of first-degree murder with a weapon, along with other charges. He could face the death penalty if convicted, though prosecutors have not said whether they will seek capital punishment.

Meanwhile, Limon's body is expected to arrive in Dhaka tomorrow. Morteza said the remains will reach Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 8:40am on an Emirates flight.

## Ready for talks

FROM PAGE 12 possibly followed by an Israeli attack, two senior Iranian sources told Reuters.

Separately, Trump told Congress he did not need approval to extend the war beyond a Friday deadline, saying the ceasefire had "terminated" hostilities.

However, he also signalled his preferred option too. "Do we want to go and just blast the hell out of them and finish them forever? Or do we want to try and make a deal?" he said, adding that "on a human basis" he did not favour military action.

## \$3b expected by June from dev partners

FROM PAGE 12 he added.

Bangladesh sought \$1 billion from the ADB. The Manila-based multilateral lender's board has already approved \$250 million for social safety net programmes, while the approval for \$750 million is expected in the middle of this month.

Of this, \$300 million will carry a 2 percent interest rate with a 15-year repayment period. The remaining \$450 million will be market-based, linked to the SOFR rate (currently 4.13 percent), repayable over 18 years with a three-year grace period.

Of the \$1.2 billion pledged by the WB, \$700 million will come from the Rapid Response Option (RRO), which allows countries to quickly repurpose and use up to 10 percent of their undisbursed amounts of existing loans to address emergency needs during a crisis.

As of July 1, last year, the undisbursed amount from the WB stood at \$9 billion. The interest rate for loans under RRO is less than 2 percent.

Discussions are also ongoing for an additional \$500 million subject to conditions related to revenue administration and the banking sector.

Bangladesh also sought \$500 million in budget support from JICA. The loan may carry an indicative interest rate of 3.05 percent, repayable over 30 years with a 10-year grace period.

Negotiations are underway with the AIB and the OFID for \$350 million in co-financed budget support under ADB arrangements.

Both loans are market based: AIB's carries a 5.08 percent interest rate with repayment over 35 years, including a five-year grace period, while OFID's carries 3.62 percent interest with repayment over 18 years, including a

three-year grace period.

Bangladesh has also sought emergency support from the IMF. In addition to \$1.3 billion from two instalments of its \$5.5 billion loan programme, the government has requested \$2 billion from the IMF's emergency support window for June.

The low domestic revenue mobilisation inevitably forces the government to seek foreign loans when budgetary spending pressures rise, said Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling.

The new government inherited many accumulated problems, and on top of that, it has had to spend heavily on fuel imports since taking office.

"So, the current government's predicament is well understood," he said, while cautioning against wastage and corruption of the emergency funds as in the past.

## Journalists held without trial for up to 620 days

FROM PAGE 1  
at 2:30pm -- around the time Sheikh Hasina was fleeing Gonobhaban.

The first information report (FIR) states that Shraban was shot in the left side of his chest, and the bullet exited through his waist. He was declared dead at Dr Azmal Hospital at 3:20pm.

Shraban, the son of a motor mechanic from Naogaon, came to Dhaka to study and took a job as a lab assistant to support his education.

The case, which was filed nine months after Shrabon died, names 408 accused, 25 of them journalists.

The basis for including the journalists appears in a single paragraph of the FIR. Accused numbers 212 to 236 -- the journalists -- are described as practitioners of "yellow journalism" who "broadcast false information through electronic and print media" and "provided provocative statements" that instigated law enforcement to kill. The case does not mention any specific broadcast or statement.

Three witnesses named in the case told The Daily Star they had no idea it was filed, nor were they eyewitnesses.

In a separate case, Farzana Rupa and Shakil Ahmed are co-accused alongside former ministers, senior police officers, and AL leaders. The case statement described them collectively as having "aided in the declaration of war against the general public." The complainant states he identified the journalists among the accused by "interrogating locals."

Both Rupa and Shakil were taken into remand for 5 days in this case.

Mozammel Haque Babu is also named in the killing of a 19-year-old named Imran Hasan, who was preparing to sit for his secondary school certificate exams when a bullet took his life.

Imran was shot around 1:00pm on August 5, when the police descended upon unarmed protesters and hunted them point blank.

The case filed with the Jatrabari police on September 4, 2024, names 297 people and a further 250 to 300 unnamed accused. Eleven of them

are journalists.

The FIR states that the accused, acting "under the direct orders and pre-planned conspiracy" of Sheikh Hasina and the leaders of the 14-party alliance, spread "rumours via online and offline platforms" that led police, Rab, and BGB officers to conduct "indiscriminate firing and physical and mental torture on innocent, unarmed students."

Babu, a television editor, is among those held responsible for the words of a former prime minister and the bullets of the police force.

Shahriar Kabir is named in a case filed over the death of Md Rafiqul Islam, who was killed during an attack on the crowd on the night of July 18, 2024, in front of Monowara Hospital in Jatrabari.

His wife Narzia filed the case with Jatrabari Police Station five weeks after her husband's death -- naming Kabir, a 75-year-old journalist and filmmaker, among those responsible.

While the grieving families of these victims seek justice, Farzana Rupa and Shakil Ahmed have been held in pre-trial detention for 619 days, Mozammel Haque Babu and Shyamal Dutta have been inside for 593 days and Shahriar Kabir for 592 days.

Farzana Rupa is accused in nine cases, Shakil Ahmed and Mozammel Babu in eight cases, Shyamal Dutta in six cases, while Shahriar Kabir is accused in at least nine cases, including one at the International Crimes Tribunal.

"There is no hope of bail from the lower courts in these cases.... Any time one of them get bail in a lower court, they are 'shown arrested' in another case immediately after," said Advocate ZI Khan Panna, a senior counsel who is representing Babu, Dutta and Kabir.

Family sources close to Shakil and Rupa said the duo were rejected bail at every turn in the lower courts before reaching the higher courts early last year.

The one-time bail was granted, it was suspended soon after. On January 20, 2025, the High Court granted bail to the couple in a murder case, but just two days later, the

Supreme Court's Appellate Division stayed that order following a petition by the state.

They had to start from the bottom up again -- a year-long process -- before finally securing a date with the High Court for a rule on April 28 this year.

That ruling, however, was postponed to May 11 after the state sought more time to investigate, even though hearings had concluded on April 21.

Three United Nations special experts questioned the interim government about them on March 7, 2025.

"It is notably concerning that journalists have been accused of charges of the utmost seriousness, reportedly including murder and inciting murder, and put under provisional detention without reportedly having had any evidence of their direct participation in such acts presented. We are concerned that the arrest and detention of Rupa and Ahmed may be directly linked to their work as journalists and their exercise of the right to freedom of expression," said the letter.

The letter was jointly signed by Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression; Ganna Yudkivska, Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; and Margaret Satterthwaite, Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers.

They rejected the presumption that journalism can incite murder -- speech can incite hostility only under very narrow circumstances, the letter noted, and cannot be "conflated with the offences of incitement to murder or murder".

Meanwhile, after being rejected at the lower courts, Shyamal Dutta sought relief with the High Court.

Eight months after his arrest, the High Court issued a rule asking the government to explain why Dutta should not be granted bail. The state challenged the rule.

His lawyer Panna said that the matter is now before the Appellate Division, where the court has spent the better part of a year deliberating on a single question -- why should he not be granted bail.

Babu's bail hearing is set for today but his lawyer Panna expects the state to drag it to the Appellate Court Division.

Shahriar Kabir has been taken into remand in five of the nine cases filed against him.

In August 2025, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention flagged the case of Shahriar Kabir to the UN Human Rights Council, arguing that Kabir's "deprivation of liberty allegedly lacks legal basis", that his detention is "arbitrary", and that he is being denied a fair trial.

It stated that Kabir was arrested without a warrant, prevented from accessing legal representation immediately after, and at court, and is being maltreated in custody.

"Kabir has a metal rod in his upper and lower left leg; he thus cannot walk freely and needs a walking stick or a wheelchair. During the court proceedings, Kabir requested permission from the Court to sit on a chair, but the magistrate did not allow him to do so," said the working group, adding, "The police did not provide Kabir with a wheelchair or allow him to use the elevator."

The submission noted how Kabir was attacked twice at court, and how it is evident that "police are seen protecting themselves rather than Kabir" as he was "dragged to the second floor of the court building".

In an interview with The Daily Star last week, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture Dr Alice Edwards, said that the cases involving arbitrary detention "clearly require judicial oversight".

"The police should be non-politicised, and the investigative body should be a professional police force operating to the same standards regardless of which political party a person represents," she commented.

"What I would really like to see is a recognition that a society cannot be built on cycles of revenge. It must be built on the rule of law, the separation of powers, and human rights -- and all of this will also lead to political stability, peaceful transitions of power, and overall improvement in everyone's lives."

## Big projects top agenda

FROM PAGE 1  
policymakers will discuss these proposals and provide necessary directives at the conference, which will continue until May 6 and feature 34 sessions over the four-day period.

A review of over 50 agendas proposed by the DCs reveals various initiatives, the implementation of which would require the government to undertake large-scale projects.

Sylhet's DC proposed constructing an expressway from Lakkatura to the airport on the Sylhet-Osmari Airport Road, while Mymensingh's DC suggested upgrading the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway to eight lanes.

Noakhali's DC proposed establishing an international-standard airport, and Gazipur's DC recommended setting up an economic zone to relocate the district's industrial factories to a designated area.

The DC of Cox's Bazar proposed a project to establish a salt processing plant, while Rangpur's divisional commissioner suggested constructing a 1,000-bed hospital.

To modernise the tourism industry, Moulvibazar's DC proposed integrated development projects in tourist areas. Additionally, Rajshahi's DC called for establishing labs to test the quality of exportable goods like vegetables, mangoes, and betel leaves.

The DC of Panchagarh suggested setting up foreign language learning centres in all districts and upazilas.

Furthermore, at least 12 DCs and one divisional commissioner -- including those from Madaripur, Barguna, Sylhet, Habiganj, Nilphamari, Thakurgaon, Rajshahi, Naogaon, Khulna, Meherpur, and Cox's Bazar -- proposed projects for planned waste management centres and water plants in all unions and municipalities across the country.

Naogaon's DC proposed gradually establishing indoor stadiums in every district, while the DCs of Kishoreganj,

### PROPOSALS INCLUDE

- Major infrastructure projects, including expressway in Sylhet
- Economic zone in Gazipur to relocate industrial factories
- Waste management centres, water plants across all unions and municipalities
- Development initiatives for marginalised groups, including free education

Netrokona, Kurigram, and Bogura suggested setting up service and assistance centres for persons with disabilities in all districts.

Meanwhile, several DCs have also submitted development proposals for marginalised communities.

These include establishing government primary schools in tea gardens, making education free for all students with disabilities and from low-income families on a district-wise basis, and introducing an integrated curriculum and assessment system to ensure learning for all children.

Additionally, they proposed formulating a policy for the establishment of qawmi madrasas, and recruiting teachers in relevant languages to ensure that students from ethnic minority groups are taught in their own languages.

Speaking at a press conference at the Secretariat yesterday, Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Ghani said 1,729 proposals were sent by divisional commissioners and DCs from across the country, of which 498 have been selected for discussion.

Responding to a query, he said the conference will not only focus on the proposals but will also see government policymakers issue necessary directives to the DCs.



## LP GAS LIMITED

(A Subsidiary of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation)  
North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh



Ref No. 28.27.0000.000.014.99.0001.25-286

Date: 30 April, 2026

Invitation for International tender notice for Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of LPG Cylinder retesting system (tilting testing ramp with 10 post) with Other machineries & equipment including related services.

LP Gas Limited (LPGL) hereby invites offer from reputed manufacturers/suppliers for Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of LPG Cylinder retesting system (tilting testing ramp with 10 post) with Other machineries & equipment including related services accordance with the terms and conditions set out hereinafter:

1	Ministry / Division	Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources / Energy & Mineral Resources Division	
2	Agency	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC)	
3	Procuring Entity Name	LP Gas Limited (A Subsidiary of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation)	
4	Procuring Entity District	Chattogram, Bangladesh.	
5	Invitation for	Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of LPG Cylinder retesting system (tilting testing ramp with 10 post) with Other machineries & equipment including related services.	
6	Invitation Ref. No.	28.27.0000.000.014.99.0001.25-286	
7	Date	30/04/2026	
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>			
8	Procurement Method	One Stage Two Envelope Tendering Method (OSTETM) for Turnkey Contract, ICT	
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>			
9	Budget & Source of fund	Own fund of LPGL	
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>			
10	Tender Package No.	Ctg/(Re-testing)/25	
11	Tender Package Name	Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of LPG Cylinder retesting system (tilting testing ramp with 10 post) with Other machineries & equipment including related services.	
12	Tender Publication Date	03/05/2026	
13	Tender Last Selling Date	16/06/2026	
14	Tender Closing Date & Time	17/06/2026, Time- 14:30 Hrs (BST)	
15	Tender Opening Date & Time	17/06/2026, Time- 14:45 Hrs (BST)	
16	Name & Address of the Office(s)	Address	
	- Selling Place of Tender Documents	i) Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, 10 <sup>th</sup> Floor, BTMC Bhaban, 2 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka, Bangladesh. ii) LP Gas Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh.	
	- Receiving Tender Documents	LP Gas Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh.	
	- Opening Tender Documents	-Do-	
17	Offer Validity Time	150 (One hundred fifty) days from the date of tender opening.	
18	Place / Date / Time of Pre-Tender Meeting (Optional)	Place: LP Gas Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh Date: 19/05/2026 Time: 11:00 Hrs (BST)	
<b>INFORMATION FOR TENDERER</b>			
19	Brief Eligibility and Qualification of Tenderer	As per Tender Document.	
20	Brief Description of Goods & Works	Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of LPG Cylinder retesting system (tilting testing ramp with 10 post) with Other machineries & equipment including related services.	
21	Brief Description of Related Services	Related Services are as per Tender Document.	
22	Price of Tender Documents	BDT 10,000 or US\$ 80 (Non-refundable) per set	
23	Lot No. Identification of Lot Location	Tender Security Amount	Completion Time in Weeks
1	Single Lot LP Gas Limited	BDT 20 (Twenty) Lac or US\$ 16300 (Sixteen Thousand Three Hundred)	32(Thirty Two) Weeks
<b>PURCHASER DETAILS</b>			
24	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Engr. Md. Siddique Hossain	
25	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	General Manager (O&D)	
26	Address of Official Inviting Tender	LP Gas Limited, North Patenga, Chattogram-4204, Bangladesh	
27	Contract Details of Official Inviting Tender	Tel: +88-02333301586, Mobile: +88-01715-694093 E-mail: sidd_hossain@yahoo.com	
28	Bidder(s) must submit the original money receipt for Tender Document along with their offer and Seal & Sign in every pages of tender documents.		
29	This Tender Notice/Document will be available at BPC website: www.bpc.gov.bd and LPGL website: www.lpgl.gov.bd		
30	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all offers in part or in full or annul the tender proceedings without assigning any reason.		

GD-975

(Engr. Md. Siddique Hossain)  
General Manager (O&D)



## Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC)

BMRC Bhaban, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212

### Research Grants for Post Graduate Medical Students

FY: 2026-2027

Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC) invites application for research grants (thesis/dissertation) from post graduate medical students. Eligible candidates are requested to submit their protocol according to PP-03 through proper channel (including letter of supervisor/guide and approval letter from local IRB) with relevant documents. Four (04) copies of the Protocol (with Questionnaire & Consent Form) along with a soft copy (word documents) to be submitted with application mentioning the undersigned from 03 May to 09 June, 12:00 Noon, 2026 (except holidays).

N.B: Grants will be possible to disburse only after getting funds from the government.

Director, BMRC

Tel: +88 02 222298396 | Fax: +88 02 222263820

Email: info@bmrcbd.org | Web: www.bmrcbd.org

GD-977



## গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

কর কমিশনারের কার্যালয়  
কর অঞ্চল-যশোর

নিটল নিলয় আর্কেড, ১০২৭/০১, ঢাকা রোড, তালতলা, যশোর-৭৪০০

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তারিখ: ১৭ বৈশাখ ১৪৩৩ বঙ্গাব্দ  
৩০ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ

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০১	কম্পিউটার অপারেটর	০১ টি
০২	প্রধান সহকারী	২২ টি
০৩	উচ্চমান সহকারী	২২ টি
০৪	সীটমুদ্রাকরিক-কাম-কম্পিউটার অপারেটর	২৩ টি
০৫	অফিস সহকারী কাম কম্পিউটার মুদ্রাকরিক	২৭ টি
০৬	অফিস সহায়ক	২৭ টি

(দেওয়ানী জাহান)  
৩০/০৪/২০২৬

উপ কর কমিশনার  
সদর দপ্তর (প্রশাসন)

সদস্য সচিব  
বিভাগীয় নিয়োগ কমিটি  
কর অঞ্চল-যশোর

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GD-974

WORLD HAND HYGIENE DAY 2026

Action saves lives

STAR HEALTH DESK

Clean hands may seem simple, but they remain one of the most powerful shields in health care. As the world marks World Hand Hygiene Day on 5 May 2026, the message is clear: small actions can save countless lives.

Every day, patients face hidden risks when receiving care. Many of these risks can be avoided through something as basic as proper hand cleaning. Yet, gaps remain. Limited access to water, soap, and clean facilities continues to challenge many settings, making this simple act harder than it should be.

This year's campaign calls on health workers and institutions to renew their commitment. Clean hands are not just about routine; they are about respect, safety, and dignity for both patients and



caregivers. With better training, steady supplies, and stronger leadership, safer care is within reach.

Since 2009, this global effort has united people under one goal: making health care safer for everyone. The 2026 message is bold and urgent – "action saves lives."

It is a reminder that change does not always require complex solutions, but consistent, mindful habits. From busy hospitals to small clinics, every clean pair of hands can break a chain of harm. Investing in basic hygiene is not just practical, it is essential for safer care. The responsibility lies with both systems and individuals to make it a daily priority. In the end, protecting lives may begin with something as simple as turning on a tap.



The toothache we ignore until it shouts

DR MUHAMMAD HASANUL BANNA

There is a familiar story in many households. It begins with a mild toothache, the kind that feels easy to ignore. A quick rinse with warm salt water, a home remedy suggested by a relative, perhaps a drop of clove oil. The pain fades, and with it, concern. Days pass, life continues, and the issue slips out of mind. Then, suddenly, the pain returns, stronger, sharper, impossible to overlook. Only then does the thought of visiting a dentist arise.

This pattern is not unusual. In fact, it is deeply rooted in everyday behaviour across South Asia. Dental care is often treated as something reactive rather than preventive. People do not seek help unless there is discomfort. What starts as a small problem quietly grows into something far more serious.

Part of this mindset comes from how many people were raised. While brushing teeth was encouraged, the importance of regular check-ups was rarely discussed. Teeth were seen as resilient, able to manage on their own. If there was no pain, there was

no reason to worry. That belief still lingers today.

Fear also plays a powerful role. The idea of sitting in a dental chair, the sound of instruments, and stories shared by others often create anxiety. This fear leads to delay, and delay allows problems to worsen.

Cost is another concern. For many, dental care feels like an expense that can be postponed. A painkiller or quick remedy seems more convenient and affordable. However, what appears to be a small saving often results in a much larger cost later when treatment becomes unavoidable.

A common habit further complicates the issue. Instead of consulting a professional, people often turn to local pharmacies. They take medicines to reduce pain and hope the problem will disappear. The relief is temporary, giving a false sense of recovery. Meanwhile, the underlying issue remains untreated and continues to progress.

Life's daily pressures also contribute to this neglect. Work, family responsibilities, and constant stress push oral care down the list of

priorities. A mild discomfort does not feel urgent enough to act on, so it is ignored.

What many fail to realise is that most dental problems begin quietly. Early stages often show little to no pain. By the time discomfort appears, the damage is usually advanced. What could have been a simple solution turns into a complicated and lengthy process.

This cycle needs to change. Oral health is not separate from overall well-being. It influences how people eat, speak, and interact with the world. Ignoring it comes at a cost that goes beyond discomfort.

The shift required is simple but significant. Visiting a dentist should not depend on pain. Regular check-ups can identify problems early, making them easier and less costly to manage. Paying attention to small warning signs can prevent bigger issues later.

Pain should not be the first signal to act. It is often the final warning. Recognising this early can make all the difference.

The write is an oral and maxillofacial surgeon. E-mail: drbannabds@gmail.com

STRETCH, BREATHE, BENEFIT  
Yoga's role in lowering blood pressure

A simple yoga routine may do more than calm the mind; it could quietly help lower blood pressure in people living with excess weight, according to new research.

Drawing on findings from 30 studies across several countries, researchers observed that regular yoga practice was linked to noticeable improvements in blood pressure levels. On average, participants who practised yoga showed a modest but meaningful drop in both upper and lower readings, suggesting a positive shift in heart health.

The analysis included over 2,600 adults, many from Asian settings, where yoga is widely practised. Beyond blood pressure, small improvements were also seen in fat levels in the blood; changes that may reduce the risk of serious illnesses over time.

While the findings are encouraging, the researchers caution that yoga alone is not a cure. The exact amount needed for benefit remains unclear, though many studies involved sessions totalling around three hours per week.

Still, the appeal is clear. Yoga is a gentle, low-cost, and widely accessible form of movement that fits easily into daily life.

As evidence grows, it may be time to see yoga not just as a wellness trend, but as a quiet ally in improving overall health.



The gender gap in empty nest syndrome: WHY MOTHERS FEEL IT MORE



DR SUMAIYA KHALED

When children leave home, the silence they leave behind does not fall evenly on both parents. For many mothers, the shift is deeper, quieter, and far more personal.

Years of caregiving often shape a mother's daily life. From school routines to emotional support, much of her identity becomes closely tied to her children's presence. When that rhythm suddenly stops, it is not just a change in routine but a loss of purpose. What once filled every hour now leaves long stretches of stillness.

Fathers, while equally attached, are often less affected in the same way. Social roles and expectations have traditionally placed men outside the home for much of their working lives. As a result, their sense of identity is less centred on caregiving. Mothers, on the other hand, may find that their primary role has quietly disappeared overnight.

This emotional gap can lead to feelings of loneliness, restlessness, and even symptoms linked to Depression. It is not uncommon for mothers to describe a sense of being "left behind", even when their children are thriving elsewhere. The pride of seeing a child grow often sits alongside an unexpected

emptiness.

Cultural context adds another layer. In many South Asian households, motherhood is deeply woven into a woman's sense of self. Sacrifice, care, and constant presence are seen as strengths. When children move away for studies or work, especially abroad, the physical distance can amplify emotional disconnection.

Yet this phase is not solely defined by loss. For some women, it becomes a turning point. Freed from daily responsibilities, they begin to rediscover interests long set aside. Some return to education, take up work, or invest time in friendships and personal growth. What initially feels like an ending can gradually open into a new beginning.

The difference lies in support and awareness. Recognising that this transition carries emotional weight is the first step. Conversations within families, maintaining meaningful contact, and encouraging independence for both parent and child can ease the shift.

Empty nest syndrome is not just about absence. It reflects how deeply love and identity can intertwine. And for many mothers, learning to separate the two becomes the quiet, necessary work of moving forward.

E-mail: sumaiyakhaleed@thedailystar.net



The beginning of the end for tobacco in the UK

STAR HEALTH REPORT

The United Kingdom has taken a bold step that could reshape the future of smoking. In a landmark move, King Charles III approved a new law that will gradually end the sale of tobacco to future generations.

Under this plan, anyone born after 2008 will never be able to buy tobacco legally, marking a major shift in how countries protect young people. Supporters say the move is about giving children a healthier start in life, free from a habit known to cause serious illness.

The decision has drawn praise worldwide, with experts calling it a turning point in the fight against tobacco. Similar steps have already appeared in smaller regions, but the UK is the largest nation to act.

Advocates hope this bold policy will inspire others to follow, creating a future where fewer lives are lost to smoking and more people can grow up healthier, stronger, and free from its grip. They argue that such action sends a clear message that protecting health must come before profit, and that lasting change is possible.

The body won't forget: the hidden story behind weight regain

STAR HEALTH DESK

Losing weight is often seen as a fresh start; a chance to reset the body and move towards better health. But new research suggests the body may have a longer memory than we think, quietly holding on to its past and shaping the future in unexpected ways.

Presented ahead of the European Congress on Obesity, the study explores why some people struggle to keep weight off even after undergoing weight-loss surgery. The answer, it seems, may lie deep within the body's own "memory".

Researchers found that in women who had early signs of high blood sugar, the body's fat-storing tissues behaved differently even after significant weight loss. While the surgery helped reduce weight and improve overall health in the short term, these tissues did not fully return to normal.

In simple terms, the body appeared to "remember" its earlier state. This memory made it harder for the body to handle fats efficiently, increasing the likelihood of weight creeping back over time.

The study followed women who had undergone weight-loss surgery and tracked their progress for several years. Initially, the results were encouraging. Participants lost a large



portion of their body weight, and their blood sugar levels improved. But over time, differences began to emerge.

Women with earlier signs of high blood sugar were more likely to regain weight compared to those without such a history. On average, they regained several kilograms within a few years, while others experienced only minimal weight gain.

This suggests that weight loss is not just about diet, exercise, or even surgery; it is also about how the body adapts internally. And sometimes, that adaptation may be incomplete.

The findings open up a new way of thinking about weight management.

Instead of focusing only on losing weight, there may be a need to address the body's underlying tendencies; its built-in patterns that quietly influence how it stores and uses energy.

Encouragingly, researchers believe this "memory" may not be permanent. With the right approach including healthy eating, lifestyle changes, and possibly new treatments; it may be possible to help the body reset itself more fully.

For now, the message is clear: weight loss is only part of the journey. Keeping it off may require understanding not just what we do, but how our bodies remember.

খ্যালাসেমিয়া একটি মারাত্মক রক্তস্বল্পতাজনিত বংশগত রোগ, যা শুধুমাত্র বাহক পিতা-মাতার মাধ্যমে সন্তানের হয়ে থাকে।

বিশেষ রক্ত পরীক্ষার (Hb Electrophoresis) মাধ্যমে জেনে নিন আপনি খ্যালাসেমিয়ার বাহক কিনা।

বাহক হলে অবশ্যই নিশ্চিত করতে হবে যেন জীবন সঙ্গী/সঙ্গিনী খ্যালাসেমিয়ার বাহক না হয়।

পরীক্ষিত বাবা-মা সুরক্ষিত সন্তান

BEACON Light for Life



## Athapaththu's SL whitewash Tigresses

Chamari Athapaththu led from the front as Sri Lanka completed a dominant 3-0 series whitewash over Bangladesh, winning the rain-curtailed third and final Women's Twenty20 International by three runs in Sylhet yesterday. In a shortened nine-over-a-side contest, the Tigresses fell short in their chase of 88 runs. Athapaththu, who was named both player of the match and player of the series, delivered an outstanding all-round performance, scoring 41 off 27 balls and taking two wickets for 15 runs. The T20I series defeat for Nigar Sultana Joy and her teammates comes on the heels of a 2-1 loss in the preceding Women's ODI series held in Rajshahi. Reflecting on the tour, Sri Lanka skipper Athapaththu said, "I'm really happy with my team's performance throughout this tour. With the World Cup coming up, we needed to improve in a couple of areas, especially power-hitting and fielding."



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## More venues, healthier diet as DPL returns

SPORTS REPORTER

Following months of uncertainty, the Dhaka Premier League is set to begin on May 4 across six venues. The country's premier one-day competition had faced doubts over its staging amid unrest surrounding the Bangladesh Cricket Board elections, which ultimately led to the fall of the Aminul Islam-led board last month.

BCB ad hoc committee president Tamim Iqbal acknowledged the challenges and outlined several changes for the upcoming edition. "This is one of the most important tournaments in our cricket ecosystem. It was challenging to organise, as cricket had been stagnant for the last few months," he said yesterday, thanking the clubs for helping resume the competition.

➤ The 12-team tournament, sponsored by Walton and powered by Bashundhara Cement, will feature 66 matches, with fixtures for the first three rounds announced and reserve days in place due to the rainy season.

➤ Matches will, for the first time, be spread across six venues -- Pubergaon Shikha Protisthan Ground 2, Cricketers Academy (300 Feet), BKSP Grounds 3 and 4, Bashundhara Sports City Complex and ULAB -- to ease travel demands.

➤ Medical support has been strengthened with ambulances at all venues and plans for ICU units at selected grounds, including BKSP

➤ BCB will provide healthier lunch options for all teams, with a fitness-focused menu replacing traditional heavy meals.

➤ Anti-Corruption Unit protocols used in the Bangladesh Premier League will be reinstated, with players and officials required to submit phones before matches, leaving access only to team managers.



New Zealand pacer Nathan Smith removed Bangladesh's Tanzid Tamim and Parvez Hossain Emon in successive deliveries early on before rain interrupted the third and final T20I in Mirpur yesterday. Despite a brief rebuilding phase, Bangladesh suffered another collapse after the restart and were bundled out for a modest 102-run total, never enough in a match reduced to 15 overs a side. [Bottom] New Zealand batter Bevon Jacobs struck an unbeaten 62 as the visitors chased the target down with six wickets and 20 balls to spare, levelling the three-match series 1-1.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Litton urges lower order to step up

SPORTS REPORTER

Going into the series, skipper Litton Das had raised concerns over the Bangladesh lower-middle order's output with the bat. In yesterday's rain-curtailed T20I series decider in Mirpur, the lower-order chaos was exhibited again during a six-wicket defeat that saw New Zealand draw level.

Both openers, Tanzid Tamim and Saif Hassan, struggled during the series. During the 180-plus chase in the opening fixture, their Powerplay contributions had actually put the side under further pressure before the middle order recovered to guide a solid chase in Chattogram.

Coming into the third and final clash, Bangladesh, batting first, lost their last six wickets for just 16 runs, showing the vulnerability of a batting order in a format where death overs contributions can have a huge impact.

"I said before that the lower order has responsibility and we want that they have some output with the bat. There was space today [to make contributions], but it was failure once again," Litton said flatly, underlining his disappointment.

Litton and Tawhid Hridoy had put on a partnership, but the tempo was different after the almost two-hour rain break. Bangladesh had lost three wickets before the break, but could not quite build on partnerships ever



since. "When you bat two different ways, knowing your strength is six batters, you will not be able to take big risks."

"When you get a break like that in the T20 format, and overs too are reduced, it brings extra pressure since you have to give a big total. Obviously, when you play a high-risk game, you can get out. If I hadn't gotten out to that shot, maybe the game would have gone deeper," Litton said of his innings.

When Shamim Hossain was dismissed, Bangladesh's innings quickly unravelled. The lower-middle order of Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain and Mohammad Saifuddin contributed 12 runs. In the last two years, Jaker Ali and Mahedi have played the most matches at number six -- 10 and 14 matches, respectively. Mahedi, in 14 innings during that period,

averages just over five, contributing 21 runs.

Litton outlined that they needed five bowlers for the 20 overs and needed their spinners to score, having already asked a reporter if there are any players in Bangladesh "who can bat at seven and bowl four overs".

"Rishad [Hossain], Mahedi and Nasum [Ahmed] are playing as spinners. All over the world, those who play as spinners can bat... Mahedi can bat, but we need his performances [with bat] in international cricket, same with Rishad and Nasum.

"For all-rounders, we have Saifuddin and [Abdul Gaffar] Saqlain, along with [Tanzim] Sakib, and we expect some batting from them because there will be games like this where we need our lower order to fire."

## Archers look to build on Asia Cup gold

SPORTS REPORTER

The second stage of the Archery World Cup is set to take place in Shanghai, China, with Bangladesh competing in all 10 events across recurve and compound disciplines, including individual, team and mixed categories. A 13-member Bangladesh contingent will leave the country today.

The Bangladesh Archery Federation held a press conference at the Bangladesh Olympic Association on Saturday in this regard, with the archers also in attendance.

Speaking about expectations, coach Martin Frederick emphasised that the primary focus is long-term preparation.

"The World Cup is part of our build-up to the Asian Games. From there, qualification for the Los Angeles Olympic Games will begin. So this is a very important and demanding period for us," said the long-serving German coach.

Elaborating on the team's targets, Frederick added: "We had a successful Asia Cup, winning gold in the men's compound team event and securing a few top-10 finishes. We want to carry that momentum into global competition, though the World Cup is another level. Reaching the quarter-finals or finishing in the top 10 would be a strong step, opening the door to the semifinals and, hopefully, a breakthrough towards medal matches."

Bangladesh head into the competition with confidence after their gold medal success in the men's compound team event at last month's Asia Cup in Thailand, raising expectations particularly in the compound section. Team member Himu Bachhar said, "We performed well in the Asia Cup and hope to maintain that consistency at the World Cup."

39  
DAYS



## Veteran Pepe's knockout milestone

The record for the oldest goalscorer in the knockout stages of the World Cup is held by Pepe. Most recently, in the Round of 16 at the 2022 FIFA World Cup, he found the net with a header in Portugal's 6-1 win over Switzerland. He was 39 years and 283 days old that day.

\*\*Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'The 11-second wonder: How Sukur stunned the hosts.'

## FIFA Congress: Sport meets politics

AGENCIES

The FIFA Congress, which concluded yesterday in Vancouver, brought together global football leaders but was marked as much by controversy as by decision-making.

A central issue was Iran's participation in the upcoming 2026 World Cup. Despite political tensions following a conflict involving the United States and Israel, FIFA president Gianni Infantino confirmed that Iran will compete in the USA as scheduled. This decision rejected Iran's earlier request to relocate their matches to Mexico.



over alleged links to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Although cleared to enter, reports indicated the officials faced restrictions and ultimately chose to leave, fuelling claims that Iranian officials had effectively been denied entry and escalating diplomatic tensions. Iran now seeks urgent talks with FIFA in Zurich to avoid further complications.

Beyond geopolitics, FIFA made several significant decisions.

Financially, the organisation announced a 15% increase in funding for all 48 World Cup teams, reflecting its strong economic position.

Additionally, Infantino revealed

unprecedented demand for the tournament, with 500 million ticket requests already recorded -- ten times more than previous editions.

At the same time, FIFA acknowledged criticism over soaring prices for the 2026 tournament and said it would review its ticketing strategy for the 2030 World Cup amid fan backlash.

Infantino confirmed his intention to run for a fourth term as FIFA president, with elections scheduled in 2027. His tenure has been defined by expansion, including the move to a 48-team World Cup.

FIFA also announced a stricter crackdown against racism on the pitch. Under new rules, players

who cover their mouths during confrontations -- often seen as an attempt to conceal discriminatory language -- could face a red card, signalling a tougher stance on abusive behaviour.

Outside the Congress venue, protests highlighted growing concerns about the social impact of mega events.

Activists and workers criticised rising living costs, displacement of homeless populations and lack of fair wages. Calls for a "FIFA dividend" emphasised the need for the organisation to reinvest in host communities.

Football-related tensions also surfaced inside the Congress. A notable moment involved Palestinian and Israeli officials, reflecting broader geopolitical divisions. Meanwhile, fans of the Vancouver Whitecaps FC protested against the possible relocation of their club.

The FIFA Congress showcased major financial and structural progress for global football but also revealed deep political and social challenges.

As the 2026 World Cup approaches, FIFA faces increasing pressure to balance sport, politics and social responsibility on the world stage.



## INTER ON BRINK OF 21ST SCUDETTO

Serie A leaders Inter Milan could be crowned champions of Italy this weekend when they take on Parma at the San Siro on Sunday. Holding a 10-point lead over Napoli, Inter need just one win in their final four matches to secure a 21st league title and third in six seasons. However, when Inter fans take to their seats on Sunday night, their Scudetto celebrations might already be underway, if Napoli lose to Como on Saturday and AC Milan -- 12 points back in third -- fail to win at Sassuolo on Sunday afternoon.

PHOTO: INTER MILAN



However, Iran's absence from the Congress drew attention. Federation president Mehdi Taj and his delegation withdrew after being detained and questioned by Canadian authorities in Toronto



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## Dhaka-Sylhet road and rail upgrade soon

Says Tarique, inaugurates Notun Kuri Sports

BSS, Sylhet

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday said the government will soon begin work to upgrade road and rail connectivity on the Dhaka-Sylhet route, aiming to ease travel and boost regional economic activity.

At a civic rally on Sylhet City Corporation's Nagar Bhaban premises, he noted that the highway's poor condition forces travellers to spend nearly 10 hours on the journey.

"This suffering has been caused due to the broken condition of the highway at different places," he said.

Tarique recalled promising to develop the highway during his election campaign. He said discussions with the relevant ministry revealed that work had stalled due



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The sluggish pace of development work by Dhaka North City Corporation, including sewerage upgrades on Paris Road in the capital's Mirpur-11, continues to drag on, causing prolonged suffering to everyday commuters, especially schoolchildren and office-goers. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## MEASLES OUTBREAK 'Interim govt ignored Unicef warning'

Reports Science magazine, says changed vaccine procurement policy behind crisis

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh's worsening measles epidemic followed the interim government's decision to halt vaccine procurement through Unicef and switch to an open tender system, despite warnings that the move could disrupt routine immunisation and trigger an outbreak, according to a Science.org report published on Thursday.

Since mid-March, the country has reported more than 32,000 suspected measles infections and over 250 suspected deaths, mostly among children, it said.

Bangladesh had long relied on Unicef to supply measles-rubella vaccines, funded mainly by Gavi with government contributions. Children receive two MR doses at 9 and 15 months, while nationwide campaigns are held every four years to maintain 95 percent coverage.

But in September 2025, the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus stopped vaccine procurement through Unicef and shifted to open tendering. Unicef strongly opposed the change.

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## \$3b expected by June from dev partners

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh is expecting \$3 billion in budget support by the middle of June from five multilateral and bilateral lenders, including the World Bank, in what would provide a sigh of relief to the government from the financial pressure triggered by the Middle East war.

About \$1.2 billion is expected from the WB, \$1 billion from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), \$500 million from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), \$250 million from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and \$100 million from the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID). The Daily Star has learnt from finance ministry officials involved with the proceedings.

The development comes after a government study estimated that an additional \$4 billion is needed in emergency budget support between May and June to plug the unexpected higher outlays for fuel and fertiliser imports for the war.

Letters were sent to development partners earlier this month seeking assistance and all responded positively, finance ministry officials said on the condition of anonymity as they are not authorised to speak with media.

"As a strategy, I don't see anything wrong with it," said Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

He, however, cautioned that the borrowing terms -- particularly interest rates and repayment periods -- must be carefully considered to ensure debt servicing remains sustainable.

In the IMF's latest debt sustainability analysis, Bangladesh's outstanding debt has already moved from low risk to moderate risk.

Some of the planned loans appear relatively stringent in terms of interest rates, though the long repayment periods provide some relief,

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**About \$1.2 billion is expected from the WB, \$1 billion from ADB, \$500 million from JICA, \$250 million from AIIB and \$100 million from the OPEC Fund.**

## Mothers left to choose between home and work

7m jobs within reach, but childcare gaps keep mid-career women sidelined

NILIMA JAHAN

Feroza Ahmed's (not her real name) professional life once revolved around high-stakes dealings with major advertisers. As a senior executive at a leading media house, she worked long hours -- often until 9:00pm -- ensuring precision in every advertising placement.

After more than 11 years in the industry, she was on the verge of becoming an assistant manager. "I was supposed to be promoted. But when the management learnt that I was pregnant and would go on leave, they didn't give me promotion."

The job became unmanageable after she gave birth to her second child.

She said, "I can leave one child with my relatives, but I can't impose two on them..."

Feroza did not return to work after her second maternity leave.

Her exit from the media house was not planned. The management never offered her any flexibility at work. "I ran the whole department from home during the Covid pandemic, but no hybrid or part-time arrangement was considered for me when I needed it the most," she said.

When she resigned, there was no attempt to retain her. Instead, her boss warned: "Once you resign, you

### HURDLES FACED BY WOMEN PROFESSIONALS



Flexible work arrangements largely absent



No reliable support systems at home, work



Lack of knowledge about disability care leaves mothers as sole caregivers



Employers' bias affects women at recruitment stage

couldn't sleep. I would wake up from nightmares."

She doubts whether she will ever be able to return to work, even if she can manage her time. "Who will hire me again? If I try to return to the industry, will anyone take me?" she asked.

Feroza's story reflects a broader pattern of mid-career exits in Bangladesh's workforce, where experienced women leave formal employment after motherhood due to structural barriers and caregiving responsibilities.

Despite long years of experience and proven performance, many women are unable to return to work after childbirth owing to the absence of flexible work arrangements and reliable support systems at home and at work.

A recent BRAC analysis found that nearly 75 percent of the 1,200 mid-career women who applied for employment in a BRAC programme had previously quit jobs due to domestic responsibilities (38.8 percent) or motherhood (36 percent).

The "motherhood penalty" is intensified by a major care burden gap. A 2021 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) time use survey found that married women

won't be able to come back."

At home, she didn't get the support she needed. "My husband told me that if I could manage everything alone, I could retain the job; otherwise, I shouldn't."

The transition took a heavy toll on her. "I was slipping into depression. I

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

## PHD STUDENTS' MURDER Florida police finally identify Bristy's body

STAR REPORT

Authorities in Florida have identified the body of Bangladeshi PhD student Nahida Sultana Bristy, who had been missing since April 16.

G o l a m Mortoza, minister (press) at the Bangladesh Embassy in the United States, told The Daily Star via WhatsApp that Florida police had contacted Bristy's brother to confirm the identification.

The family has requested that her body be sent back to Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Embassy in Washington, DC, in coordination with the Bangladesh Consulate in Miami, has begun repatriation procedures, he added.

Bristy and Zamil Ahmed Limon, both 27-year-old PhD students from Bangladesh, went missing on April 16. Limon was last seen at an off-campus complex where he shared an apartment with murder suspect Hisham Abugharbieh and another roommate.

Detectives used cellphone location data and license plate reader records to track Abugharbieh's car and Limon's phone to a bridge where Limon's body was found on April 24. Prosecutors said the body had multiple stab wounds and

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## 'Ready for talks or war'

Says Iran after Trump rebuffed its new proposals for peace

**US-EU rift widens over US troops' withdrawal from Germany**

**Trump says US Navy acting like 'pirates' in the Gulf**

**Khamenei calls for economic battle to 'disappoint' enemies**

AGENCIES

Iran said yesterday that it was up to the United States whether to pursue a negotiated settlement or to return to open war, but that Tehran was ready for either outcome.

"Now the ball is in the United States' court to choose the path of diplomacy or the continuation of a confrontational approach," deputy foreign minister Kazem Gharibabadi told diplomats in Tehran, according to state broadcaster IRIB.

"Iran, with the aim of securing its national interests and security, is prepared for both paths," he said.

His comment came after a senior Iranian military officer said renewed fighting with the US was "likely", hours after President Donald Trump said he was not satisfied with an Iranian negotiating proposal.

Iran delivered the new draft to mediator Pakistan on Thursday evening, state media reported. An Iranian official confirmed that it proposed reopening shipping in

the Strait of Hormuz and ending the US blockade, while leaving talks on its nuclear programme for later.

The war, launched by the United States and Israel in late February, has been on hold since April 8, after one failed round of peace talks in Pakistan.

"They want to make a deal, but ... I'm not satisfied with it," Trump told reporters at the White House, adding that Iran's leadership was "very disjointed" and split into "two or three groups".

"They're asking for things that I can't agree to," he said, noting that negotiations by phone were continuing.

Earlier, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran was ready to pursue diplomacy if the US changed its "excessive approach, threatening rhetoric and provocative actions."

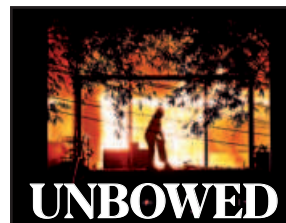
Iran has activated air defences and is planning a wide response if attacked, having assessed a short, intensive US strike

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the southern Lebanese village of Mayfadoun in the Nabatieh district yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



On the occasion of **WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY** (May 3), which this year centres on the theme "Shaping a Future at Peace", **The Daily Star** continues its exhibition on the brutal attack on its Dhaka office on December 18, 2025. We invite you to walk through these scarred spaces, bear witness to what was endured, and stand with the truth that refused to burn. The exhibition will remain open from **May 4 to May 15 (11:00 am to 8:00 pm)** at **The Daily Star Centre**.