



CIVIL ADMIN TOP POSTS Frustration grows over contractual appointment

25 out of 85 secretaries are contractual appointees; bureaucrats call for cancelling contracts

BAHARAM KHAN

The BNP-led government appears to be continuing the controversial practice of placing retired officials in key administrative positions – a policy widely followed by the previous interim government – which, according to many bureaucrats, is stoking frustration within the civil service.

Moreover, the government has drawn criticism over the recent appointments of two controversial officials to key deputy commissioner-level posts.

Bureaucrats expected that the elected government would overhaul the administration by removing contractual officials from top positions, but they are now witnessing the opposite.

According to the public administration ministry's data, all eight senior secretaries, aged between 65 and 75, are contractual appointees, most of whom had been out of administrative roles for over a decade. They include the cabinet secretary, the principal secretary to the prime minister, and the secretaries for public administration and land.

Ministry sources said that during the interim government's tenure, at least 18 secretaries were appointed on a contractual basis for one to two years, while the BNP-led government appointed 19 secretaries on contract, cancelling more than a dozen such appointments.

"Signs of indecision and instability are visible in selecting top officials. Sudden decisions should not be made regarding senior

- 8 senior secretaries appointed on a contractual basis
- Most were away from admin roles for over a decade
- Two controversial officials given key posts
- 6 serving secretaries withdrawn, attached to ministry

posts. Unexpectedly, this is happening during the tenure of an elected government," public administration expert Firoz Mia told The Daily Star.

Ministry officials said that in the past, about 10 percent of the total number of secretaries were appointed on a contractual basis, but the number now stands at 25 out of a total of 85 secretaries.

One of them is Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Ghani, who was made an officer on special duty (OSD) in 2009 and retired in 2016.

About a decade after his retirement, Nasimul was appointed secretary of the President's Office and later home secretary during the interim government's tenure.

Just a day before the current government took office on February 17, he received a contractual appointment as cabinet secretary – an instance many experts and bureaucrats described as unprecedented in Bangladesh's administrative history.

Officials at the public administration ministry could not say anything about the tenure of his contractual appointment.

When asked, Nasimul said, "I don't know how long I'm going to hold this post... I will leave the day the government wants me to. If it directs me not to come to office from tomorrow, I won't."

A new precedent was also set through the appointment of ABM Abdus Sattar, a former private secretary to the BNP chairperson, as the principal secretary to the PM.

According to sources at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), this was the first time a party chief's private secretary was given the post of principal secretary.

When a secretary is appointed on a contractual basis, it impacts the promotion and placement cycles of three to four regular officers. Currently, more than a hundred officers are missing out on their due promotions and roles because of these contractual appointments. Consequently, this is causing frustration within the administration, said a joint secretary on the condition of anonymity.

CONTROVERSIAL APPOINTMENTS

The recent government decision to appoint two controversial officials to key deputy commissioner-level posts came as a shock to many

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Star wins global accolade for youth readership drive



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star has clinched the third place in the Best Initiative to Bolster Next Generation of Readership category at the 89th INMA Global Media Awards 2026, a global stage that honours the most innovative initiatives in the news industry across the world.

The recognition came for the paper's flagship youth engagement platform, the National Newspaper Olympiad (NNO).

INMA announced 60 winners on Thursday, awarding first, second, and third places in each category, with select exceptions where judges exercised discretion.

This year's competition drew a record 960 entries from 274 leading news media brands across 46 countries, including newspapers, magazines, digital outlets, and TV and radio stations.

From 200 finalists chosen in March by an international jury of 60 media executives from 26 countries, winners were revealed in Berlin.

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Rampant hill razing continues to plague the remote Jungle Salimpur area of Sitakunda upazila in Chattogram. Despite recent law enforcement drives, new settlements are being built by carving into the hilly terrain. Ahead of the monsoon, locals fear major accidents as heavy rains could trigger landslides. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Gulf clash clouds truce deal hopes

US, Iran exchange fire at Hormuz; Trump insists ceasefire holds; UAE repels Iranian air attack

REUTERS, Washington

US and Iranian forces clashed in the Gulf and the United Arab Emirates came under renewed attack, but President Donald Trump said a ceasefire was still holding despite the flare-up, which dented hopes for a swift diplomatic resolution to the crisis.

of Hormuz, under fire. There was no damage done to the three Destroyers, but great damage done to the Iranian attackers," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

He later told reporters the ceasefire remained in effect and played down the exchange. "They trilled with us today. We blew them away," Trump said in Washington.

Iran accuses US of targeting ships, attacking civilian areas

Some 1,500 ships trapped in Gulf due to Iran conflict: IMO

Iranian forces seize the oil tanker Ocean Kol in the Gulf of Oman

Israeli strike kills 4 people in south Lebanon

The escalation came as Washington awaited Tehran's response to a US proposal to end the war, which began on February 28 when the US and Israel launched airstrikes on Iran.

Trump said on Thursday three US Navy destroyers were attacked as they moved through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital conduit for global oil supplies that Iran has all but closed since the war began. Yesterday, Iran accused the US Navy of "aggressive acts" against two Iranian tankers. "Three World Class American Destroyers just transited, very successfully, out of the Strait

Iran, however, accused the United States of breaching the ceasefire, which had largely held since it was announced on April 7 but has been under its biggest strain since Trump announced and then paused a new naval mission in the strait this week.

"Every time a diplomatic solution is on the table, the US opts for a reckless military adventure," Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said yesterday.

Iran's top joint military command said US

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Bangladeshi broadcasters risk FIFA WC blackout

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The FIFA World Cup 2026 is set to begin in just 33 days, but there is a strong possibility that Bangladeshi viewers may face a World Cup blackout, as no broadcaster in the country has secured telecast rights for the global showpiece event as of yesterday.

Whopping asking price for broadcast, limited commercial inventory, and inconvenient match timings are the reasons behind Bangladeshi broadcasters not showing interest in telecasting the greatest football show on earth.

Four years ago, state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) had secured terrestrial broadcasting rights while satellite channels, T Sports and GTV, secured satellite rights. These TV channels aired all 64 matches live, while Toffee held the digital streaming rights.

This year, however, no broadcaster has acquired the rights because of the massive price being demanded by Springbok Pte Ltd, the Singapore-based company that secured media rights for Bangladesh.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon told The Daily Star that the government is not interested in purchasing the rights, given the current financial situation and allegations of corruption surrounding the previous deal.

"It seems that not even one-tenth of the money spent on the purchase last time was recovered," Swapon said yesterday.

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A child turns his face away as he walks past plumes of toxic smoke rising from plastic waste openly being burnt along the banks of the Buriganga river. Despite grave risks to public health and the environment, this harmful practice of plastic waste disposal remains a common sight in the area. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Suwendu named West Bengal CM

Oath ceremony today; TMC plans to challenge governor's move to dissolve assembly

STAR DESK

Suwendu Adhikari was formally named the Chief Minister of West Bengal yesterday, days after the BJP's resounding victory in the recently concluded assembly elections.

Dilip Ghosh, a senior BJP leader and former state president, proposed Adhikari's name at the legislature party meeting held in Kolkata earlier in the day.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who was appointed the central observer for the meeting, and Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, the co-observer, were present.

"I announce the name of Suwendu Adhikari elected as Leader of West Bengal BJP Legislative Party," Shah announced at the legislature party meeting.

The oath-taking ceremony for the newly elected BJP MLAs is scheduled for today and will take place at the Brigade Parade Ground. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, BJP national president Nitin Nabin, and chief ministers from other BJP-ruled states are expected to attend.

The BJP secured a historic victory in the recently concluded West Bengal assembly elections, ending the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress's (TMC) 15-year rule.



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When theatre speaks in letters

RBR

I found myself back on Bailey Road with my friends last weekend, after what felt like ages. Joining us was Anisul Haque, a friend's better half and the celebrated writer who makes pop culture look effortlessly stylish.

But the real significance lay not in our presence, but in the rare chance to witness theatre royalty -- Ramendu and Ferdousi Majumdar -- in action.

Love Letters, the 48th production of Group Theatre, was staged at the Nilima Ibrahim Auditorium of Bangladesh Mohila Samity. Directed by Tropa Majumdar and performed by her parents, it felt like the most heartfelt gift a child could ever give to their performer parents: a fully booked show.

Adapted from AR Gurney's Pulitzer-nominated drama and translated into Bengali by Abdus Selim, the play wove six decades of love and longing into the fabric of Bangladesh's Liberation War.

Exactly at this point, I made the mistake of mixing up the Indian rendition of the same play, Tumhari Amrita. For some odd reason, the name Amrita and the motif of letters made me think of Amrita Pritam and Sahir Ludhianvi. In reality, Javed Siddiqui's Hindi-Urdu adaptation -- directed by Feroz Abbas Khan and performed by Shabana Azmi and Farooq Sheikh -- was inspired by painter Amrita Sher-Gil. That performance, too, has a



PHOTO: STAR

cult following.

In Dhaka, however, Love Letters became an intimate Bengali adaptation. Minimalist in form yet rich in emotion, it was both a tribute to enduring love and to the Majumdar family's extraordinary legacy.

By sheer luck, I've seen both versions. Each reflects its own cultural fabric: Love Letters, rooted in Bangladesh's liberation narrative; Tumhari Amrita, in India's evolving social landscape. Both remind us that theatre's magic

lies not in elaborate sets but in the raw intimacy of human voices carrying stories of love, separation, and history.

With only two actors, letters, and emotions, Love Letters unfolded as a timeless experience. Ramendu as Ananta and Ferdousi as Maisha embodied two lifelong correspondents whose dreams, disappointments, and ambitions spanned sixty years.

Rather than dialogue, the story emerged through notes and cards, creating an atmosphere of intimacy,

love and separation, victories and defeats, memory and history. It was both a romantic drama and a reflection of Bangladesh's socio-cultural journey. It was the Theatre's commitment to blending global classics with local narratives.

The evening reminded me why Bailey Road remains the beating heart of Dhaka's theatre scene. I can still picture the old Mohila Samity theatre from my childhood, waiting for Dewan Gazi's Kicha to begin. The hall was dimly lit, wooden chairs creaked under eager audiences, and the thrill of anticipation hung in the air. For a child, the stage felt enormous. When the play began, the actors' voices filled the room with raw intensity, larger than life. That first encounter was more than just watching a performance, more like an initiation into the magic of theatre.

Mohila Samity, with its humble charm and buzzing atmosphere, became a symbol of Dhaka's cultural awakening. Legends like Ramendu and Ferdousi Majumdar built their reputations here, and countless young theatre lovers discovered the power of live performance.

Even today, memories of that old hall glow with nostalgia -- a reminder of a time when theatre was less about spectacle and more about soul. Dhaka people who missed this show, keep an eye out for the next. It is simple, yet it holds you in a lingering trance of unrequited love and longing.

'Frustrated' group trying to create instability: Fakhrul

UNB, Naogaon

Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday said a "frustrated" group is trying to create instability in society.

"There is a frustrated group in the country. They remain disappointed all the time and, at different times, try to create instability in society," he said at a discussion marking the 165th birth anniversary of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore at Rabindra Kachari Bari in Naogaon.

Fakhru, also BNP secretary general, did not name any specific group.

Turning to politics, he lamented that the

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UK LOCAL POLLS Labour Party suffers heavy losses Anti-immigrant Reform UK makes gains

REUTERS, London

Prime Minister Keir Starmer yesterday vowed to fight on to deliver on his promise to bring "change" to Britain after his Labour Party suffered heavy losses in local elections that deepened doubts over his ability to govern.

Just under two years after winning a landslide national election, Starmer saw voters punish his Labour government, dealing it a blow in some of its traditional strongholds in former industrial regions in central and northern England.

The main beneficiary was the populist, anti-immigrant Reform UK party led by Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage, which gained more than 350 council seats in England. It could also emerge as the main opposition in Scotland and Wales to the pro-independence Scottish National Party and Plaid

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Frustration grows over contractual appointment

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bureaucrats. The two were on the list of 17 officials against whom a probe committee recommended punitive action for their involvement in scuffles at the public administration ministry on September 10, 2024, over appointments of DCs.

One of the two was appointed as the deputy commissioner of a district and the other was given a key post at the PMO.

Several pro-BNP officials told this newspaper that they are frustrated by the appointments. They fear that if those involved in scuffles at the Secretariat are given key posts, junior officers may feel encouraged to use force to secure promotions or desired postings.

Former secretary Badiur Rahman said officials capable of engaging in tussles at the Secretariat are unfit for public service.

"It's not possible for the prime minister to know every officer personally. The problem lies with those who recommended the appointment of these questionable officials," said Badiur, a former chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

Meanwhile, the sudden withdrawal of the secretaries of three vital divisions under finance and planning ministries exposed a lack of cohesion within the administration.

On March 25, Shahriar Kader Siddiky, secretary at Economic Relations Division (ERD); Nazma Mobarek, secretary at Financial

Institutions Division (FID); and Shirajun Noor Chowdhury, secretary at Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) were removed from their posts.

According to several finance ministry officials, Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury was unaware of such a decision. Soon after the minister learnt about it, he gave directives to reinstate all three.

Seeking anonymity, one of the ministry officials said that making such a decision without the knowledge of the finance minister reflects internal weakness in the administration.

Regarding this, Firoz Mia said, "Withdrawing and then reinstating officers in a top position like secretary creates a negative impact on others. This casts a shadow over the image of not only the administration, but also the government."

WITHDRAWAL OF 6 SECRETARIES Between February and March, the public administration ministry withdrew six serving secretaries from various ministries and divisions and attached them to it without mentioning any specific reason.

Seeking anonymity, one of them told The Daily Star, "I was labelled as a pro-BNP official and denied promotions during the tenure of the Awami League government. But at least I was able to work. Now, I'm not allowed to function even after being promoted to secretary. I cannot describe how humiliating this is."

BNP moves to restore grassroots discipline

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81 units of Chhatra Dal, Jubo Dal, and Swachhshasebak Dal are expected to attend and brief him on the current organisational situation, said Rizvi, also senior joint secretary general of BNP.

The leadership will inform Tarique that wrongdoing by some grassroots leaders is largely due to weak organisational control, as many local committees have expired or become inactive, creating room for controversial activities, said party insiders.

The terms of 10 out of 11 committees of the BNP's affiliated and associate bodies have expired, they added.

The meeting is being held at a time when the BNP high command is concerned about the conduct of grassroots leaders and activists, as they are defying party instructions, engaging in criminal activities, obstructing law enforcers from discharging duties, and extorting money, said party insiders.

Some local leaders are even creating opportunities for people linked to the Awami League to get involved in BNP politics, they said.

"Recently, it has come to the notice that some groups, holding posts in Jubo Dal or using the identity of Jubo Dal, have been showing muscle power, rehabilitating associates of the fascist, extorting money, engaging in illegal occupation of property,

and obstructing law enforcers from performing their duties" said a press release issued on May 5.

A standing committee member, who is also a minister, said on condition of anonymity that after the formation of the government, many senior party leaders have become less involved in organisational activities, creating space for controversial incidents at the grassroots.

"In some cases, party men even attacked police personnel. This is unacceptable. If such activities are not stopped immediately, they will cause greater damage to the party," he said.

Several recent incidents have embarrassed the party leadership.

For instance, in Feni, a man reportedly linked to the AL and accused in a case filed over the attack on the motorcade of late BNP chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia, was made general secretary of a ward unit BNP committee.

After the central leadership became aware of the matter, the BNP expelled him from the party. The district committee concerned was also suspended. President and general secretary of the municipal unit BNP were expelled for their role in forming the controversial committee.

In Faridpur's Bhangra, the district BNP convener sought withdrawal of a murder case, calling it "political", although the key accused is the vice-

The official termed their withdrawal and attachment to the ministry "motivated and whimsical" and blamed a state minister and a senior secretary appointed on a contractual basis for such a decision.

THE WAY FORWARD To gather perspectives on restoring administrative discipline, this correspondent spoke with two secretaries and six additional and joint secretaries. Most of them said that cancelling contractual appointments to top posts would address half the problem, while assigning qualified officers to appropriate positions would resolve the rest.

A secretary currently on Post-Retirement Leave (PRL) said, "The prime minister has received praise for his speeches and actions. However, it is nearly impossible to maintain professionalism with the individuals picked for vital positions in the administration."

"Effective communication among secretaries must be ensured to make the administration dynamic. This is not possible with officers from a bygone era, as the administration has already entered an advanced stage. If the government fails to realise this, the situation will worsen day by day," observed the official.

When contacted, Ehsanul Hoque, senior secretary at the public administration ministry, declined to comment on the overall situation of the administration.

"I have nothing to say about it," he told The Daily Star.

president of Bhangra municipality AL.

Party insiders said the incident raised questions about whether some local leaders were trying to take initiatives to drop cases by terming them politically motivated in order to protect people going against the party rules.

In another incident, police detained the president of Cumilla Sadar upazila BNP over allegations of extortion. His supporters then gathered outside the station and chanted slogans demanding his release. He was freed around 12 hours later, party sources said.

In Narayanganj, supporters of a Jubo Dal leader attacked police personnel and snatched away the leader, leaving several officers injured. After the incident, the Jubo Dal leader was expelled.

In Rajshahi, the city unit of Jubo Dal expelled two ward-level leaders over their alleged involvement in snatching a tender submission box from the Rajshahi Development Authority office. The tender box was under police protection when a group of unruly men forcibly took it away.

In another incident in Narayanganj, a ward BNP general secretary was expelled after allegations of taking money from a businessman.

In Joypurhat, a BNP leader from Punat union in Kalai upazila was fired after he was sent to jail in a cattle theft case.

Suvendu named West Bengal CM

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West Bengal governor RN Ravi dissolved the state assembly on Thursday, paving the way for the formation of the new government, reports Hindustan Times online.

Trinamool Congress said yesterday it will challenge the decision by the governor to dissolve the state assembly. Mamata also said in a press conference that she would not follow the convention of going to the governor to hand over her resignation as the state's chief minister.

Gulf clash clouds truce deal hopes

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forces had targeted an Iranian oil tanker and another ship, and carried out air attacks on civilian areas on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz and nearby coastal areas. It said Iranian forces responded by attacking US military vessels east of the strait and south of the port of Chabahar.

A spokesperson for Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters said the Iranian strikes inflicted "significant damage," but US Central Command said none of its assets was hit.

Later Iran's Press TV reported that, after several hours of exchanges, "the situation on Iranian islands and coastal cities ... is back to normal now".

The confrontation was not confined to the waterway. The United Arab Emirates said its air defences engaged with two ballistic missiles and three drones from Iran yesterday, resulting in three moderate injuries.

Iranian forces seized the oil tanker

Suvendu Adhikari, who joined the BJP in December 2020 after leaving the Trinamool Congress, where he had once been a close associate of Banerjee, emerged as the clear choice. He defeated Banerjee in Nandigram in 2021 and more recently won the Bhabanipur seat, her traditional stronghold, by a margin of over 15,000 votes.

The BJP is understood to be considering the appointment of two deputy chief ministers. No one has held the post of a deputy chief minister

in Bengal in the last two decades, the last being CPM leader Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, who served under former chief minister Jyoti Basu.

The key contenders for the deputy chief ministers' posts -- one of which is likely to go to a woman leader -- are Agnimitra Paul, who won from Asansol Dakshin and Shankar Ghosh, the winning candidate from Siliguri.

Home Minister Amit Shah yesterday held separate meetings with Paul and Ghosh in Kolkata to discuss these arrangements.

Meanwhile, an Israeli strike yesterday killed four people including two women in the southern Lebanon town of Taura, the health ministry said, as state media and AFP correspondents reported Israel was conducting widespread strikes.

Despite a truce in the war between Israel and Hezbollah, fighting has not stopped in south Lebanon, where an Israeli strike killed a civil defence rescuer earlier in the day.

The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) said that more than 70 tankers were being prevented from entering or leaving Iranian ports yesterday.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that the US should get a response from Iran to its proposal to end the war.

"We'll see what the response entails. The hope is it's something that can put us into a serious process of negotiation," Rubio, told reporters in Rome yesterday.

Bangladeshi broadcasters risk FIFA WC blackout

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"Given the government's current financial situation, this is a significant factor. It would have been good for the viewers if it were on the government channel, but considering our financial situation, we are not thinking about this right now. However, if anyone shows interest privately, the government may show interest based on mutual benefits."

Springbok's package deal, acquired from FIFA, includes television, radio, mobile, and internet rights.

According to documents seen by The Daily Star, the company is demanding USD 12.30 million (around Tk 150.98 crore), excluding applicable taxes, advance income tax and VAT, from BTV.

The documents state that 50 per cent of the amount must be paid by May 10, with the remaining due by June 10. The package includes live coverage and highlights of all 104 matches, including the opening and closing ceremonies.

According to insiders, T Sports, Star News and an event management company had shown interest in broadcasting the tournament at a significantly lower price, but Springbok has so far refused to reduce its asking price. Which means the cost could climb to nearly Tk 200 crore after taxes and VAT for a tournament, which, as per the schedule, will see 52 matches finish before 4:00am Bangladesh time, while the remaining 52 will begin after 4:00am.

WHAT HAPPENED WITH BTV?

Ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, BTV spent Tk 98 crore to secure terrestrial broadcasting rights for all matches following a late government move. T Sports and GTV separately acquired satellite rights.

In contrast, during the 2018 FIFA World Cup, BTV received the live feed free of cost from rights holders and reportedly earned around Tk 1.5 crore in advertising revenue.

A top BTV official requesting anonymity said no final decision has yet been made regarding this year's tournament.

According to the official, Springbok contacted Bangladesh's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, which later forwarded the matter to BTV.

The channel then approached Springbok last month to learn about pricing. Later, they also contacted FIFA in hopes of obtaining a free feed, but have not received any response so far.

The official said that neither BTV nor the Bangladesh government participated in FIFA's tender process announced on September 9 last year, and if they did, they might have gotten it for a lower amount.

PRIVATE BROADCASTERS STRUGGLING WITH PRICING

Officials from private satellite channels said they had been in active discussions with Springbok earlier, but talks stalled because of the rigidity on asking price.

Broadcasters believe the current

pricing is unsustainable for Bangladesh's market size, especially if BTV does not share the burden. They stressed that they are seeking a collaborative approach rather than a sub-licensing arrangement.

According to them, FIFA likely based Bangladesh's valuation on the widely reported Tk 98 crore deal involving BTV in 2022, and as the number of matches increased to 104 this year, the price has nearly doubled.

SIMILAR PROBLEMS IN INDIA AND CHINA

Bangladesh, however, is not alone in facing a broadcast blackout. Millions of football fans in India and China could also miss the tournament because of unresolved broadcast rights negotiations.

According to Reuters, a Reliance-Disney joint venture offered around USD 20 million for Indian broadcast rights, well below FIFA's asking price, while Sony also declined to submit an offer.

No official broadcaster has yet been announced for China either, despite the country accounting for nearly half of all global digital and social viewing hours during the 2022 World Cup.

The 2026 tournament begins on June 11, leaving little time for broadcasters to finalise agreements, establish infrastructure and sell advertising inventory.

[Baharam Khan and Anisur Rahman also contributed to this report.]

Seven more children die from measles, symptoms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven more children died from measles and measles-like symptoms in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, taking the total number of confirmed and suspected measles deaths to 343.

Of the seven, one is a confirmed measles death, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With the lone death, the number of confirmed deaths rose to 58. The death was reported from Barishal division, according to the DGHS.

With six more suspected measles deaths reported during the same period, the total number of suspected deaths is now 285.

Of the latest deaths, three were reported from Sylhet division, while two were reported from Dhaka and one from the Khulna division.

During the same period, 282 new confirmed cases were reported, bringing the total to 6,490.

Besides, the DGHS recorded 1,212 new suspected cases in 24 hours, bringing the total to 46,710.

PRAYER TIMING		MAY 9			
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
4:15	12:45	5:00	6:34	8:00	
JAMAAT 4:50	1:15	5:15	6:38	8:30	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

Noor Ali, firm sued over laundering of Tk 115cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has filed a Tk 115.58 crore money laundering case against Unique Group chief Mohd Noor Ali and Borak Real Estate over allegations of building a 28-storey structure on government land in Banani and laundering earnings from hotel operations there.

In a press release issued yesterday, the CID said preliminary findings found evidence that the accused illegally earned and laundered Tk 115,58,24,707 by operating a hotel business in an unauthorised building.

The CID alleged irregularities and fraud in the “Banani Super Market cum Housing” project on government land under DNCC control.

The case was filed with Banani Police Station on May 7 under sections 4(2) and 4(4) of the Money Laundering Prevention Act-2012.

According to the CID, Borak Real Estate had an agreement to construct a 14-storey building in

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TANGILA TASNIM

Samia Khatun (pseudonym), 31, has faced injustice since her first day as a worker at a garment factory in Tongi, when she was just 16.

“I could not complete my education, and I work from early morning until late at night, sometimes even continuously for 24 hours during peak periods.

“Yet my pay is miserly, to say the least. When I ask my supervisor for a raise, I’m told I’m not educated enough to deserve a higher salary. But I see male workers, even those who joined much after me, earn more than I do... There is a lot of injustice against women in our factory. When I fall sick or ask for leave, my supervisor often scolds me or cuts my salary.”

Despite years of toiling, Samia’s monthly salary, which is also not paid on time, stands at Tk 18,000.

Apart from a glaring wage gap, women like Samia also fall victim to other workplace abuses. “When I was younger, I faced repeated sexual harassment at the workplace. I used to cry and thought about quitting many times, but I had responsibilities, so I could not leave.”

Such accounts align with broader findings that point to persistent gender inequality in wages and workplace conditions across the garment industry.

A 2023 report by the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), conducted with Microfinance Opportunities, finds that women garment workers in Bangladesh face a wage gap of 51-60 percent across major industrial hubs.

Women, who make up about three-quarters of the workforce, consistently earn less than men, according to the report, which was based on a survey of 1,300 workers since April 2020 in Dhaka, Chattogram, Gazipur, Narayanganj and Savar.

Songs, recitations mark Tagore’s 165th birth anniv at Chhayanaut



PHOTO: ABRAR FAIYAZ NILOY

STAR REPORT

The first evening of Chhayanaut’s two-day “Rabindra Utsab 1433” unfolded yesterday at the Chhayanaut Auditorium, as artistes and audiences gathered to celebrate the 165th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore through music, recitation, and performance.

The programme began at 6:30pm with an opening address by festival president Dr Sarwar Ali, who formally inaugurated the celebration.

Reflecting on Tagore’s lasting influence on Bangalee culture and humanity, he said, “Rabindranath spent his whole life trying to establish peace and harmony through his songs and stories. Chhayanaut is merely continuing what he had started.”

The auditorium, lit in soft blue hues and centred around a towering portrait of Tagore, saw the evening open with a group dance-chorus performance of “Bhubanjora Ashonkhani” by Chhayanaut artistes.

Throughout the programme, performers presented a carefully selected repertoire of

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RMG SECTOR

Myriad abuses of women workers

From pay gaps to sexual harassment, exploitation runs deep



I believe gender discrimination in our sector has significantly decreased. The earlier notion of systemic bias against women has largely diminished. As for sexual harassment, it is now virtually nonexistent within factories. Factory regulations are strict, and complaints can be lodged easily. I can confidently say that among all workplaces in Bangladesh, the garment sector is one of the safest.

ANWAR-UL-ALAM CHOWDHURY PARVEZ
Former president, BGMEA

The former BGMEA president’s statement is completely false and unreal. It is not surprising that owners speak from their own side, but they do not see the real conditions of workers. Every day, there are cases of sexual harassment -- unwanted touching and verbal abuse are very common for women workers.

MOSHREFA MISHU
President, Garments Sramik Unity Forum

Median monthly earnings that year (2023), excluding overtime, stood at Tk 9,669 for women and Tk 10,928 for men. Both figures

fall far short of living wage estimates set by the Global Living Wage Coalition, ranging from Tk 19,200 to Tk 26,000.

Research also shows that male supervisors frequently bully, harass and sexually abuse women workers, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds, often without consequence.

At the heart of Bangladesh’s economy lies the ready-made garment (RMG) sector, whose share of exports rose to around 60 percent over time, peaking at 84 percent in FY 2022-23, and it employs roughly four million workers, about 80 percent of them women.

According to Economic Observatory, the rise of the RMG sector has been dramatic – from just \$1.8 million in exports in 1980 to about \$47 billion in 2023, driven by a mix of entrepreneurial initiative and state support.

Yet, despite its global success, compliance gaps remain widespread.

RMG Bangladesh’s 2026 report says that even after the newly elected government took power, nearly one-third of factories failed to pay Eid bonuses five days after the government-set deadline ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr this year.

Despite instructions to clear bonuses by March 12 and February wages by March 9, more than 3,000 factories, about 30 percent, had not paid Eid bonuses, according to the Industrial Police.

The non-compliant units include over 3,000 ready-made garment factories, as well as establishments in the textile, chemical and other sectors.

This failure comes amid mounting pressure on the RMG sector in recent years.

Before Covid-19, around 4,500 factories under the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association employed roughly 5.5 million workers, with 75-85 percent being women.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Dhaka, Islamabad sign MoU to fight drug trafficking



PHOTO: PID

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh and Pakistan yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen bilateral cooperation in preventing drug trafficking, narcotics abuse, and related money-laundering activities.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed and his

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Rooppur plant gets automated control system for unit-1

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Russia’s Rosatom nuclear energy corporation has completed the delivery and installation of the full automated process control system (APCS) for the first power unit of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

“This is another milestone in Bangladesh’s first nuclear power project,” Rosatom said in a press release yesterday.

The system was supplied by Rosatom Automated Control Systems (RASU).

The delivery included 22 subsystems covering automated process control and radiation monitoring for unit-1, which features a VVER-1200 reactor.

Saikat Ahmed, media focal point officer of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, said the systems act as the plant’s “brain”, using operational and safety controllers to adjust valves and pumps instantly, keeping the plant within safe operating envelopes.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Student activists under the banner of Gonotantrik Chhatra Jote bring out a torch procession on the Dhaka University campus last evening demanding cancellation of the “anti-state” trade agreement signed between Bangladesh and the United States.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

BE A PROUD MEMBER OF UTTARA BANK FAMILY

Career Opportunity

Uttara Bank PLC. invites **online** applications from young, smart & energetic persons for appointment as Assistant Officer (General) & Assistant Officer (Cash) in the Bank.

Candidates fulfilling the following criteria are eligible to apply :-

01. Academic Qualifications :-

For Assistant Officer (General) :

(a) Master's degree or 04 (four) years integrated Honours Degree in any discipline from any recognized educational Institution.

(b) The candidates must have at least one 1st Division/Class/equivalent GPA/CGPA in any of the Board/University examinations & no 3rd Division/Class/equivalent GPA/CGPA in any of the said examinations.

For Assistant Officer (Cash) :

(a) Bachelor/Bachelor (Hons) Degree in any discipline from any recognized educational Institution.

(b) The candidates must have at least one 2nd Division/Class/equivalent GPA/CGPA in any of the Board/University examinations.

In case of the results published in grading system the previous 1st, 2nd & 3rd Division/Class will be determined against the existing GPA/CGPA as under :-

(i) For the results of S.S.C. and H.S.C examinations or equivalent examinations thereof :-	
G. P. A 3.00 or above	1st Division
G. P. A 2.00 or above but below 3.00	2nd Division
G. P. A 1.00 or above but below 2.00	3rd Division

(ii) For CGPA given by the recognized University/Educational Institution.		
In the Scale of 4.00	In the Scale of 5.00	Equivalent class/ Division
3.00 or above	3.75 or above	1st Division/Class
2.25 or above but below 3.00	2.813 or above but below 3.75	2nd Division/Class
1.65 or above but below 2.25	2.063 or above but below 2.813	3rd Division/Class

02. Age : Not over 32 years as on 31st May, 2026.

03. Period of probation/ training, confirmation and Salary :

There will be a 01 (one) year period of probation/training which will start from the date of joining in the Bank's service. An Assistant Officer (General) will be paid monthly consolidated emolument of Tk. 28,000/- (Taka twenty eight thousand) only and an Assistant Officer (Cash) will be paid monthly consolidated emolument of Tk. 26,000/- (Taka twenty six thousand) only during the probation period. After successful completion of the probation period, an Assistant Officer (General) will be confirmed in the scale of pay of Tk 15000-1000X8-23000-1500X15-45500/- with other allowances/benefits as admissible in the grade and an Assistant Officer (Cash) will be confirmed in the scale of pay of Tk.14000-950X8-21600-1250X15-40350/- with other allowances/benefits as admissible in the grade.

04. Computer literacy is essential.

The interested candidates may apply through the Website of Uttara Bank PLC. (www.uttarabank-bd.com) latest by the 17th May, 2026 by filling up the Online Application Form of the Bank.

Upon successful submission of the online application, candidates will be able to download a copy of the submitted Application Form containing a Tracking Number. All instructions provided therein must be followed carefully.

Any employee of Uttara Bank PLC. or any person who has been engaged as Assistant Officer (General) (on contract basis)/Assistant Officer (Cash) (on contract basis) in the Bank having requisite qualifications may apply through proper channel, if he/she is not above 35 (thirty five) years of age as on 31-05-2026.

Only shortlisted candidates will be notified of the Written Test through the Bank's website and SMS to their respective mobile numbers. Candidates who meet the prescribed eligibility criteria and whose applications are found valid upon scrutiny will be called to appear in the MCQ Test for shortlisting.

- Any form of Persuasion/Influence/Recommendation/Canvassing will make the candidate liable for rejection of his/her application.
- One candidate may apply for only one post either Assistant Officer (General) or Assistant Officer (Cash).
- The candidate who is in job elsewhere needs to apply through proper channel.
- The candidates who are not willing to serve anywhere in Bangladesh need not to apply.
- The candidates must have a valid mobile number and email address.
- No application/document in person will be received.

Incomplete application will not be entertained. The competent authority of the Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any application at any stage without assigning any reason and also reserves the right to cancel/modify the recruitment/selection process, if need arises without assigning any reason.

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www.uttarabank-bd.com

Doctor who treated 11-yr-old rape victim gets death threats

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrokona

The doctor who treated an 11-year-old rape victim in Netrokona's Madan upazila and later shared details of the case with the media has allegedly received death and rape threats.

Dr Sayma Akter, a gynaecologist at a diagnostic centre in the upazila, filed a general diary with Madan Police Station on Thursday, said the station's Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Tarikul Islam.

"Police are taking her security concerns seriously," the OC added.

According to the GD, the 11-year-old girl went to Dr Sayma on April 30 with medical complications. An examination found that she was 27 weeks pregnant. After speaking with the girl and her mother, the doctor learned that a teacher at the madrasa she attended had allegedly sexually abused her.

As the treating physician, Dr Sayma shared necessary information with the media about the victim's condition. Her statements were aired on television, published by online news outlets, and widely circulated on social media.

Since then, she has allegedly received abusive messages as well as death and gang-rape threats from various Facebook accounts and WhatsApp numbers.

In the GD, Dr Sayma said she and her family are living in extreme fear and insecurity and are worried about possible attacks.

On Wednesday, madrasa teacher Amanullah Mahmudi Sagar, the accused in a case over raping and impregnating the 11-year-old, was sent to jail following his arrest.

According to the first information report (FIR), on October 2 last year, after classes ended in the afternoon, Sagar told the child to sweep the mosque adjacent to the madrasa. By that time, other teachers and students had already left for home. After the child finished sweeping, he told her to clean his room. When she entered the room, he raped her.

The FIR further said that when the child cried out, he threatened to beat her and expel her from the madrasa.

The child was allegedly raped on four or five more occasions in a room adjacent to the mosque's veranda and also in classrooms, the FIR read.

Songs, recitations mark

FROM PAGE 3
Rabindra Sangeet through solo and ensemble performances exploring themes of devotion, love, humanity, and nature.

Songs such as "Tumi Robe Nirobe", "Borisho Dhora majhe Shantiro Bari", "Aji Bijon Ghore", and "Amar Hiyar Majhe" drew emotional responses from the packed audience, many of whom quietly sang along.

Artists including Jayanto Chattopadhyay, Mohuya Manjari Sunanda, Azizur Rahman Tuhin, Satyam Debnath, Senjuti Barua, RiaChakraborty, Iflat Ara Dewan, and Priyanka Bhattacharjee took part in the programme alongside group performances by Chhayanaut members.

Meanwhile, on the occasion, a three-day programme was inaugurated yesterday at the Rabindra Kachharibari

in Shahjadpur, Sirajganj -- a place deeply intertwined with the memories of Rabindranath Tagore.

Various local social and cultural organisations also arranged programmes to celebrate "Rabindra Jayanti". Around 11:00am, the festival at Shahjadpur was officially inaugurated by State Minister for Health and Sirajganj-6 MP MA Muhiit. In Barishal, Charukala Barishal organised a series of cultural programmes at the Ashwini Kumar Hall yesterday to mark the occasion.

The organisation also observed its 39th founding anniversary alongside the celebration.

The event began in the morning with a dance performance by students of Prantik Sangit Bidyalay. A day-long art exhibition was also held.



A child chases a flock of geese to direct them towards the water. Many in the haor regions earn money by rearing and trading geese, and their children also help care for the large waterfowl. The photo was taken in Kishoreganj recently.

PHOTO: TAFSLUL AZIZ

No room to walk on Ctg footpaths

Shops, parked vehicles occupy walkways in key areas

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Footpaths across key commercial areas in Chattogram have become increasingly inaccessible, forcing pedestrians onto busy roads and raising serious safety concerns.

Yesterday morning, Jubilee Road, one of the port city's major commercial hubs, presented a chaotic scene. Shops selling tyres, tubes, and sanitary goods had extended their operations onto public walkways, leaving little to no space for pedestrians.

Stacks of ceramic tiles and rubber tyres occupied stretches meant for foot traffic, forcing people onto roads used by moving vehicles.

"We cannot walk through the footpaths because the shops have occupied every inch," said Mainul

Islam, a resident of Enayet Bazar. "We have to walk on the main road, literally putting our lives at risk with every step."

The situation is not confined to one road. A visit to several key roads,



including Nawab Sirajuddaula Road, Momin Road, Telipotti Road, and Jamal Khan Road, found widespread encroachment and poor enforcement. In many areas, pedestrians were unable to walk more than 200 yards without facing

obstructions.

On KB Fazlul Quader Road, footpaths have effectively turned into parking spaces for motorbikes, while near Chawkbazar Post Office, pavement space is being used for spray-painting steel furniture, exposing passersby to chemical fumes.

CCC Mayor Shahadat Hossain said eviction drives are conducted regularly but acknowledged limitations.

"The CCC's mobile courts conduct eviction drives regularly, but it is not possible to conduct them every day," he said, adding that CMP should play a more proactive role in keeping footpaths clear.

Attempts to reach CMP Commissioner Hasan Md Showkat Ali in this regard went unanswered.

Rooppur plant gets

FROM PAGE 3

APCS in nuclear power plants are sophisticated, safety-critical digital networks that monitor thousands of sensors -- tracking temperature, pressure, and flow rates -- to automatically manage reactor operations and ensure safety, he added.

The system will monitor equipment performance, electricity generation, and technological processes during both commissioning and operational phases of the power unit.

"Currently, all the automated process control equipment for the first power unit of the Rooppur NPP has been delivered and commissioned at the construction site," said Gleb Murashov, managing director of Automated

Process Control System Division at RASU.

"We have implemented several improvements as part of the project. For example, the automated radiation monitoring systems have been implemented in a compact, bench-type design, a first for this type," he added.

The Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant is being constructed with Russian technology and will consist of two VVER-1200 reactors with a combined capacity of 2,400 megawatts.

The Generation III+ reactor design complies with international safety standards.

Fuel loading began at the unit-1 on April 28, taking the project into operational stage.

Noor Ali

FROM PAGE 3

Banani, but allegedly violated the terms by constructing a 28-storey building without approval. Later, the Sheraton Dhaka five-star hotel was established there.

The CID alleged that the project was not completed within the stipulated time and that DNCC did not receive its due share. It also alleged that the agreement was revised several times through influence.

The investigation also found that the required no-objection certificates from Rajuk and the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh were not obtained during construction, the CID said.

According to the press release, the building exceeded the approved height limit, creating risks and obstacles for aircraft take-off and landing.

The CID said the accused later transferred, converted and moved the illegally earned money through various means, constituting money laundering.

It added that the amount of laundered money could increase after determining the actual value of the allegedly occupied assets.

The CID's Financial Crime Division is currently investigating the case and operations are ongoing to uncover further information and arrest the accused, the press release said. The Daily Star tried to contact Noor Ali for comments, but his phone was found switched off.

Man beaten

FROM PAGE 3

Police said Selim was accused in nine cases, including theft and robbery.

Purnima Saha, daughter-in-law of Gopal Chandra, said two thieves entered their house by digging a tunnel.

She alleged that the intruders held her and her child hostage at knifepoint after entering the house. She said they took Tk 3.5 lakh in cash, eight bhoiri of gold ornaments, and the jewellery she was wearing at the time.

"When they were trying to escape, we screamed for help, and my brother-in-law tried to catch one of them. Later, the villagers arrived and managed to catch one person," Purnima said.

UP member missing for over three days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A union parishad member in Patuakhali Sadar upazila has been missing for over three days.

Md Shahidul Islam Jomaddar, 37, is a member of Ward 3 of Lohalia Union Parishad.

According to family sources, Shahidul left home around 7:30pm on Tuesday and headed towards the Patuakhali-Lohalia road. Since then, his whereabouts have remained unknown.

After searching different locations without success, the family sought assistance from police.

Family members said Shahidul was recently married and had been actively carrying out his public duties since being elected as a UP member by a large margin in the local government election.

His maternal uncle, Md Sohrab Hossain, filed a GD with police the day after his disappearance. Patuakhali Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Moniruzzaman said police are investigating the matter.



Journo arrested in 5 cases over clash, attack on students

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Police have arrested a local journalist in Khagrachhari in five cases filed at different police stations in the district.

Jiten Barua, former president of Khagrachhari Press Club, is a Somoy TV staff reporter and BSS Khagrachhari correspondent.

He was arrested in the town's Shapla Chattar area on Thursday evening, said Md Kay Kislul, officer-in-charge of Khagrachhari Sadar Police Station.

Of the five cases, two were filed with Khagrachari Sadar Police Station, while one each was filed with Dighinala, Matiranga, and Panchhari police stations, said the OC.

Four cases are related to a clash involving BNP and Awami League activists in Khagrachhari district in 2023. The other case was filed over an attack on students on August 4, 2024. He was produced before a Khagrachhari court yesterday, the police official added.

Industrial Land with Factory Shed for Sale
273 decimal industrial land with factory shed located in Kachpur, Sonargaon, Narayanganj area will be sold. The land is directly connected to Dhaka - Chittagong highway.
Contact : 01958-069455, 01408-717121



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তালিকাভুক্তির বিজ্ঞপ্তি
ব্র্যাক ইউনিভার্সিটি-তে সরবরাহকারী তালিকাভুক্তির জন্য নিম্নোক্ত গ্রুপে আবেদনপত্র আহবান করা হচ্ছে।

যে আইটেম/সেবার জন্য তালিকাভুক্ত করা হবে তার নাম	গ্রুপ-এ : ব্র্যান্ড (Brand) ডেস্কটপ কম্পিউটার, ল্যাপটপ কম্পিউটার, সার্ভার, প্রিন্টার, স্ক্যানার। গ্রুপ-বি : ক্লোন (Clone) ডেস্কটপ কম্পিউটার। গ্রুপ-সি : নেটওয়ার্কিং ইকুইপমেন্ট-এক্সেসরিস এন্ড ল্যান (LAN) ইকুইপমেন্ট। গ্রুপ-ডি : ফটোকপিয়ার মেশিন, ফ্যাক্স মেশিন, পেপার প্রোডার মেশিন। গ্রুপ-ই : ইউপিএস, আইপিএস, ভোল্টেজ স্ট্যাবিলাইজার। গ্রুপ-এফ : মাল্টিমিডিয়া প্রজেক্টর, মাল্টিমিডিয়া স্ক্রীন ও সাউন্ড সিস্টেম। গ্রুপ-জি : এয়ার কন্ডিশনার এবং রেফ্রিজারেটর, মাইক্রোওয়েভ ওভেন। গ্রুপ-ইউ : অফিস ও ক্লাসরুম চেইনার। গ্রুপ-আই : স্কুল অব ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং এন্ড কম্পিউটার সায়েন্স-এর ল্যাব কম্পোনেন্ট ও ইকুইপমেন্ট: EEE/CSE. গ্রুপ-জে : ম্যাথমেটিস এন্ড ন্যাচারাল সায়েন্স (এমএনএস), মাইক্রোবায়োলজী, বায়োটেকনোলজি, এ্যাপ্লাইড ফিজিক্স এন্ড ইন্টেলিজেন্স, ফিজিক্স, ফার্মেসী ডিপার্টমেন্ট-এর ল্যাব রাসায়নিক দ্রব্য/পদার্থ, গ্যাসওয়ার ও ইকুইপমেন্ট।	গ্রুপ-কে : মুদ্রণ ও বাঁধাই কাজ (প্রিন্টিং প্রেস)। গ্রুপ-এল : বিজ্ঞাপন এজেন্ট। গ্রুপ-এম : ব্র্যান্ড অফিস ফার্নিচার (উভেন ও স্টীল)। গ্রুপ-এন : নন-ব্র্যান্ড অফিস ফার্নিচার, রিপেয়ার ও রেনোভেশন (কার্পেট্রি)। গ্রুপ-ও : এয়ার কন্ডিশনার এক্সেসরিস (কম্প্রেশার/গ্যাস ইত্যাদি)। গ্রুপ-পি : ইলেক্ট্রিক এবং ইলেক্ট্রনিক্স আইটেম। গ্রুপ-কিউ : কম্পিউটার/আইটি এক্সেসরিস। গ্রুপ-আর : সিসিটিভি, মোটাল ডিটেক্টর/সিকিউরিটি ইকুইপমেন্ট। গ্রুপ-এস : ফায়ার ফাইটিং এন্ড সেফটি ইকুইপমেন্ট। গ্রুপ-টি : ইভেন্ট ম্যানেজমেন্ট ও ব্রডকাস্টিং এন্ড প্রোডাকশন। গ্রুপ-ইউ : কম্পিউটার/আইটি এন্ড অফিস ইকুইপমেন্ট সার্ভিস ও রিপেয়ার। গ্রুপ-ডি : ট্রান্সলে এজেন্ট। গ্রুপ-ডব্লিউ : গিফট এন্ড মার্চেন্টাইজিং আইটেম। গ্রুপ-এক্স : ফিজিটাল প্রিন্টিং (পিভিসি ব্যানার, ফেস্টুন ইত্যাদি)।
তালিকাভুক্তির সময়সীমা	০২ (দুই) বছর (জুলাই-২০২৬ হতে জুন-২০২৮)।	
সিডিউল সম্বন্ধে স্থান সময়সীমা এবং মূল্য	উপরোক্ত সুল্লিষ্ট গ্রুপে যে সকল প্রতিষ্ঠানের উল্লেখিত কাজে কমপক্ষে ০৩ (তিন) বছরের সুল্লিষ্ট গ্রুপে বাসার অভিজ্ঞতা আছে শুধুমাত্র সে সকল প্রতিষ্ঠান আগামী মে ১০, ২০২৬ থেকে মে ২১, ২০২৬ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালে (সকাল ৯:৩০ থেকে বিকেল ৩:০০ টা পর্যন্ত) প্রতি সেট সিডিউল ১,০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকা মাত্র (অক্ষেরতযোগ্য) নগদে জমা দিয়ে হিসাব বিভাগ, ব্র্যাক ইউনিভার্সিটি, ঠিকানাঃ খ-২২৪ প্রগতি সরণি, মেরুল বাজা, ঢাকা-১২১২ থেকে সঙ্গ্রহ করতে পারবে। একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান সর্বোচ্চ ০৪ (চার) টি গ্রুপের জন্য তালিকাভুক্ত হতে পারবে।	
নিরাপত্তা জামানত	তালিকাভুক্তির জন্য চূড়ান্তভাবে নির্বাচিত প্রতিষ্ঠানকে সিডিউলে উল্লেখিত গ্রুপ ভিত্তিক নিরাপত্তা জামানত পে-অর্ডারের মাধ্যমে ব্র্যাক ইউনিভার্সিটি-র অনুকূলে জমা দিতে হবে যা তালিকাভুক্তির মেয়াদ শেষ হলে আবেদনের প্রেক্ষিতে ফেরত প্রদান করা হবে।	
আবেদনপত্র দাখিলের স্থান ও তারিখ	খামের উপর "গ্রুপের নাম" লিখে নিম্নোক্ত ঠিকানায় রক্ষিত বক্সে জমা দিতে হবেঃ প্রকিউরমেন্ট ডিপার্টমেন্ট, ব্র্যাক ইউনিভার্সিটি, লেভেল-০৪, খ-২২৪ প্রগতি সরণি, মেরুল বাজা, ঢাকা-১২১২। জুন ০৪, ২০২৬ হতে জুন ০৮, ২০২৬। সকাল ১০:০০ টা হতে বিকাল ৪:৩০ টার মধ্যে।	

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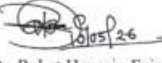
কম্পিউটার সায়েন্স এন্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ
বরিশাল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, বরিশাল, বাংলাদেশ।
ফোন: +৮৮০২৪৪২১০২০-২৯ (২০৫০, ২০৯৯)
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Memo No: BU/CSE/Robotics/04/26/02Date: 10/05/2026

Invitation for e-Tender (OTM)
e-Tenders is invited in the National e-GP System portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of the following goods under the Revenue Budget of University of Barisal.

SL No.	Tender/ Proposal ID No.	Invitation Reference No	Name of Works	Tendering Method	Tender/ Proposal Publication & Opening Date and Time	Tender/ Proposal Document last selling & Security Submission Date and Time
1	1272557	BU/CSE/ Robotics/ 04/26/01	Robotics and Computing equipment purchase for CSE Robotics lab.	OTM	10-May-2026 10:00 & 24-May-2026 10:00	24-May-2026 09:00 & 24-May-2026 09:30

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Document from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's branches.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).



(Dr. Rahat Hossain Faisal)
Chairman
Department of Computer Science and Engineering
University of Barisal.

GD-1064



World Food Programme

Expression of Interest (EOI)
Prequalification of Food Retailers and Wholesalers for WFP Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char Island
Ref. WFP/BDCO/EOI/26/001

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is transforming food assistance for Rohingya communities in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char, through its innovative Value Vouchers (E-voucher) system. Using WFP Food Assistance Cards, beneficiaries enjoy the freedom to select from a wide range of perishable and non-perishable food, as well as some non-food items, from the E-voucher shops.

WFP is calling on experienced and reputable local food retailers and wholesalers to partners in delivering essential/impactful food assistance via the Electronic Voucher Programme in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char.

Scope of Services:
Selected partners will be responsible for:

- Procurement of essential food commodities (e.g., rice, lentils, vegetable oil) and limited non-food items, where applicable. WFP-contracted retailers will be encouraged to source food items from local producers in Cox's Bazar or Chattogram district to support the local economy also other areas in Bangladesh.
- Implementation of a comprehensive logistics plan covering transportation, adequate storage/warehouse facilities, quality control, and staff availability for distributing commodities within the camps in Cox's Bazar district (Ukhliya & Teknaf) and Bhasan Char.
- Running the distribution points (Electronic voucher shops) in line with the humanitarian principles/code of conduct, ensuring strict adherence to food quality and safety standards across all stages of the supply chain.

Payments will be reimbursed by WFP on a monthly or fortnightly basis (15 days), subject to compliance with operational and reporting requirements.

Minimum Requirements

- Valid legal registration, Trade License, TIN, VAT Registration, Incorporation Certificate, client list with contact number and all required legal documents to run the company in Bangladesh.
- Minimum **3 (three) years of experience** as an established business, preferably in food retail/wholesale, with a strong understanding of the food commodity supply chain in Bangladesh.
- Demonstrated required experience in similar assignments, supported by contracts/work orders, experience certificate or appropriate documentation.
- Minimum available financial capacity of **BDT 3.5 crore for Cox's Bazar** and **BDT 2.0 crore for Bhasan Char**, dedicated to the WFP E-Voucher Programme, supported by relevant audit reports or asset documentation.
- Bank Statement of company/business for the last **2 (two) years**.
- The supplier must not be included in the **United Nations Security Council Consolidated Sanctions List** and must not be **debarred by CPTU**, Government of Bangladesh or blacklisted by other UN agencies or NGOs.

Operational Readiness and Service Delivery Requirements

- Readiness to deploy adequate experience staff to outlet locations based on operational requirements.
- Ability to provide staff training in retail operations, in-store services, and store maintenance by the certified company.
- Ability to develop, maintain and implement store operations manuals (including back-office, logistics procedures and visibility items) in the required language.
- Ability to establish and maintain well-equipped warehouse/storage facilities for proper handling and quality assurance.
- Capacity to maintain at least one (1) month of buffer stock at warehouse level.
- Ability and willingness to procure locally produced fresh food items (e.g., vegetables, eggs, chicken, live fish) from local farmers.
- Willingness to enhance service quality through data-driven approaches, ensuring uninterrupted supply, high service standards, and proper hygiene and cleanliness.
- Ability to comply with Bangladesh regulations and WFP food quality and safety standards.
- Commitment to WFP's humanitarian principles and standards, including non-discrimination and data protection requirements.

Submission Process
Interested and reputable organizations working in the food retail/wholesale business sector or relevant sector, who have the supply chain expertise and capacity to provide the services mentioned above, are kindly requested to submit their Expression of Interest (EOI) to the Email: ban.nfprocurement@wfp.org.

All required documents must be submitted via the mentioned submission email. WFP reserves the right to disqualify from the expression of interest (EOI) process if any company found to have conflict of interest. This EOI does not constitute a contract award. Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

Deadline for submission: Friday, 04 June 2026 at 16:00 hrs Dhaka Time



ISRAELI STRIKES

More than half of Lebanon population depends on aid

AFP, Beirut

More than half of Lebanon's population depends on humanitarian aid, a European Union official said yesterday, as Israel continues its attacks on the country despite a ceasefire in the two-month-long war with militant group Hezbollah.

"At present, more than three million people, meaning more than half of the population here in Lebanon, depend on humanitarian aid to survive," EU crisis management chief Hadja Lahbib told reporters after meeting Lebanese President Joseph Aoun in Beirut.

Lahbib said that since the start of the war on March 2 the 27-member bloc has provided 100 million euros in aid and sent six planes carrying humanitarian aid, with a seventh expected today. Israeli strikes in Lebanon have killed more than 2,700 people and displaced over one million since early March, according to authorities.

The UN launched an emergency appeal in March for \$308 million in humanitarian aid for Lebanon, but in two months it has raised just \$126 million, according to UN agencies. Lahbib, who said that the ceasefire has opened "a narrow window of hope", called for Hezbollah "to cease its attacks and be disarmed" and said that "Israel must put an end to its bombardments".

'Too much at stake to accept ignorance'

Nearly 30 Democratic lawmakers press Rubio to clear US ambiguity over Israel's nuclear capability

DAWN ONLINE

Nearly 30 Democratic lawmakers have urged US Secretary of State Marco Rubio to end Washington's longstanding ambiguity over Israel's alleged nuclear weapons programme, arguing that such secrecy has become untenable during the ongoing war on Iran.

Israel is widely believed to be in possession of nuclear weapons, though it neither acknowledges nor denies having a nuclear arsenal.

In a May 4 letter addressed to Secretary Rubio, the lawmakers said the US was "currently engaged in a war against Iran, a conflict with nuclear dimensions that the administration has not adequately addressed with Congress or the American public".

The move is led by Congressman Joaquin Castro, a senior Democratic lawmaker from Texas who has served in the US House of Representatives since 2013 and is known for his work on foreign policy and intelligence-related issues, including his tenure on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

In a post on the social media platform X on Thursday, Castro said, "For nearly six decades, the US has voluntarily remained in the dark on Israel's nuclear capabilities. The ambiguity ends now.

"There is too much at stake to accept ignorance. We are at war alongside Israel against Iran without knowing what their red lines are for using a nuclear weapon," he said.

The letter repeatedly questioned the US government's refusal to publicly acknowledge Israel's alleged nuclear arsenal, while noting that multiple nuclear-armed states are directly involved in or affected by the conflict.



"The risks of miscalculation, escalation, and nuclear use in this environment are not theoretical," the lawmakers warned, adding that Congress had a "constitutional responsibility to be fully informed about the nuclear balance in the Middle East".

The lawmakers argued that "a policy of official ambiguity about the nuclear capabilities of one party to this conflict makes coherent nonproliferation policy in the Middle East impossible".

The document is unusual

because it openly presses the State Department to answer detailed questions about Israel's alleged nuclear weapons capability, including warheads, launch systems, fissile material production, nuclear doctrine and possible thresholds for nuclear use.

"What nuclear weapons capability does Israel have?" the lawmakers asked directly. They also requested information on "any nuclear weapons systems that Israel fields, including warheads and launchers".

The letter sought clarification on whether Israel possessed uranium enrichment capability and whether the Negev Nuclear Research Centre at Dimona produced fissile material or plutonium.

The lawmakers further asked whether Israel had communicated to US officials "any nuclear doctrine, red lines, or thresholds for nuclear use in the context of the current conflict with Iran".

Another question asked: "Has the administration received any assurances from Israel that nuclear weapons will not be used?"

The lawmakers also sought to know whether there had been "any indications of Israel planning to use or deploy nuclear weapons during the recent Iran conflict or during other conflicts."

Lula, Trump hail positive talks after rocky ties

Trade, tariffs feature in Washington meeting

REUTERS, Washington

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said on Thursday that three hours of White House talks with US President Donald Trump had helped to stabilize Brazil-US relations that have been strained over Trump's tariff policy.

The two leaders had been scheduled to take questions from reporters together in the Oval Office but did not appear, prompting speculation of a breakdown in talks amid Trump's anger over Brazil's prosecution of former President Jair Bolsonaro.



But Lula, speaking to reporters at the Brazilian embassy after a beef filet lunch with Trump at the White House, said he had asked for no press conference ahead of the meeting and reported progress in resetting ties.

"We took an important step in consolidating the Brazil-United States relationship," Lula said. "It is important that the United States regain an interest in things happening in Brazil."

Trump praised the "very dynamic president of Brazil" in a social media post that said the meeting with Lula had gone "very well."

The two leaders discussed tariffs, trade, security, critical minerals and organized crime.

US and Brazilian trade officials agreed to talk in coming weeks to discuss what the Brazilian side described as an end to tariffs. Brazilian officials were happy with the outcome because establishment of the working group bought them some time on the issue of tariffs.



This handout photo released by the Ukrainian Chernobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve yesterday, shows smoke billowing over buildings in the town of Chernobyl from a forest fire in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone in northern Ukraine, amid the Russian invasion.

PHOTO: AFP

AIRPORT PROJECT

Nepal anti-graft body charges ex-minister

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's anti-graft watchdog has filed charges against 13 people, including a former finance minister, and a Chinese firm in a case alleging multi-million-dollar corruption in a major airport project, officials said yesterday.

The charges are the latest in a slew of graft allegations involving the China-backed airport construction project in the tourist hub of Pokhara, nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas.

"We have registered a case against 13 people and a company for giving tax exemption, which allowed double benefit to the contractor company," Suresh Neupane, spokesman for the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), told AFP.

Nepal's former finance minister Gyanendra Bahadur Karki and former finance secretary Shankar Prasad Adhikari were among those charged, along with China CAMC Engineering and two company bosses, CIAA said.

WW2 CELEBRATION

Russia, Ukraine fight on despite truce offer

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia and Ukraine yesterday accused each other of violating a unilateral two-day ceasefire announced by Russian President Vladimir Putin to cover the anniversary celebrations of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany.

Four years since the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine triggered the deadliest conflict in Europe since World War Two, Russia and Ukraine are still pummeling each other with missiles, drones and artillery.

With no victory yet in sight for either side in a gruelling war of attrition, Putin announced a May 8-9 ceasefire to cover the celebrations of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany - Russia's most revered national holiday.

Kyiv responded that a ceasefire just for the holiday was inappropriate and called instead for an indefinite truce to begin two days earlier, which Moscow ignored.

The Russian Defence Ministry said 264 Ukrainian drones had been downed in the early hours of yesterday, while Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said the capital had been targeted and officials said the Urals region of Perm had been attacked with drones.

"Despite the declaration of a ceasefire, Ukrainian armed forces

continued to launch attacks using unmanned aerial vehicles and artillery against our troops' positions, as well as against civilian facilities in the border regions," Russia's defence ministry said.

Russia has warned that any attempt by Ukraine to disrupt the Victory Day military parade on Red Square today would lead to a massive missile strike on Kyiv. Moscow has told foreign diplomats that if Ukraine does attack the event, they should evacuate the Ukrainian capital.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russian forces continued to strike Ukrainian positions during the night yesterday, which he said showed Russia has not made "even a token attempt to cease fire on the front."

"As we did over the past 24 hours, Ukraine will respond in kind today as well. We will defend our positions and people's lives," Zelensky said.

The Soviet Union lost 27 million people in World War Two, including many millions in Ukraine, but pushed Nazi forces back to Berlin, where Adolf Hitler committed suicide and the red Soviet Victory Banner was raised over the Reichstag in May 1945.

This year's parade in Moscow will have no military equipment on display due to the threat of attack from Ukraine.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Pirojpur
E-mail: pirdivisionrhd@gmail.com

Invitation for Tender

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Road Transport & Bridges/Road Transport & Highways Division			
2	Agency	Roads & Highways Department			
3	Procuring Entity Name	Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Pirojpur.			
4	Procuring Entity Code	N/A			
5	Procuring Entity District	Pirojpur			
6	Invitation for	Toll Collection Activity and Operation & Maintenance of Real-Time Web-Based Toll Collection System for Bekutia Bridge at 41st Km of Barishal-Jhalokathi-Pirojpur-Bagerhat-Khulna Road (N-807) for 3(Three) years under Pirojpur Road Division during the year 2025-2026.			
7	Invitation Ref No	35.01.7980.462.99.171.20-1145			
8	Date	07/05/2026			
KEY INFORMATION					
9	Procurement Method	NCT & OTM			
FUNDING INFORMATION					
10	Budget and Source of Funds	GOB			
11	Development Partners (if applicable)	N/A			
PARTICULAR INFORMATION					
12	Project/Program Code (if applicable)	N/A			
13	Project Name (if applicable)	N/A			
14	Tender Package No.	01/Manual/PSN/PRD/2025-2026 (Re-Tender)			
15	Tender Package Name	Toll Collection Activity and Operation & Maintenance of Real-Time Web-Based Toll Collection System for Bekutia Bridge at 41st Km of Barishal-Jhalokathi-Pirojpur-Bagerhat-Khulna Road (N-807) for 3(Three) years under Pirojpur Road Division during the year 2025-2026.			
16	Tender Publication Date	07/05/2026			
17	Tender Last Selling Date	01/06/2026 up to 05:00 PM			
18	Tender Closing Date and Time	02/06/2026		12.30 PM	
19	Tender Opening Date and Time	02/06/2026		01.00 PM	
20	Name & Address of the office(s)	Address			
	Selling Tender Document (Principal)	Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Pirojpur.			
	Selling Tender Document (Others)	(i) Office of the Superintending Engineer. RHD, Procurement Circle, Sarak Bhaban, Tejgaon, Dhaka. (ii) Office of the Superintending Engineer, RHD, Barishal Circle, Barishal.			
	Receiving Tender Document	(i) Office of the Superintending Engineer, RHD, Barishal Circle, Barishal. (ii) Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Pirojpur.			
	Opening Tender Document	Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division Pirojpur.			
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER					
21	Eligibility of Tenderer	As Per TDS			
22	Brief Description of Services	Toll Collection Activity and Operation & Maintenance of Real-Time Web-Based Toll Collection System for Bekutia Bridge at 41st Km of Barishal-Jhalokathi-Pirojpur-Bagerhat-Khulna Road (N-807) for 3(Three) years under Pirojpur Road Division during the year 2025-2026.			
23	Price of Tender Document (Tk)	TK .5000.00 (Five Thousand) Only			
24	Package No	Identification of Package	Location	Tender Security Amount (Tk)	Completion Time in Weeks / Months
	01/Manual/PSN/PRD/2025-2026 (Re-Tender)	Toll Collection Activity and Operation & Maintenance	Bekutia Bridge at 41st Km of Barishal-Jhalokathi-Pirojpur-Bagerhat-Khulna Road (N-807)	17,50,000/- (Seventeen lakhs fifty thousand)	36 (Thirty-Six) months
25	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings. This notice will be available on RHD website www.rhd.gov.bd and CPTU website www.cptu.gov.bd.				

GD-1066

Md. Rasel
ID No. 602347
Executive Engineer (C.C.), RHD,
Road Division, Pirojpur

Address learning gaps at primary level

Without basic skills, students can't thrive in secondary education

The latest Unicef-backed study on the country's primary education system should serve as a wake-up call for everyone involved. According to the findings, an alarming 91 percent of Grade 5 students in mathematics and 65 percent in Bangla remain at the "novice" level, meaning they cannot answer even half of the questions appropriate for their grade. These are children entering secondary school without acquiring the most basic foundational skills expected at the primary level. Despite years of expanded enrolment and substantial public investment in education, such learning gaps are unacceptable, to say the least.

There is no doubt that, over the years, we have made commendable progress in bringing children into schools. But enrolment means little if students fail to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills. A child who struggles to read fluently or do simple mathematics in Grade 6 is unlikely to cope with increasingly complex lessons in later years. This problem is, unfortunately, not new. National assessments have repeatedly shown weak learning outcomes at the primary level. A prolonged disruption caused by the Covid pandemic further widened the inequalities. The latest findings suggest that the system has failed to recover adequately from those setbacks. If a vast majority of primary students cannot read, write, or count at the expected level after completing five years of schooling, can the transition from primary to secondary education be considered meaningful academic progression?

For too long, our education system has remained overly dependent on rote learning, examination results, and certificate-oriented success, while classrooms remain ill-equipped to address differing learning needs. Teachers themselves frequently lack adequate training and support to identify struggling learners and provide remedial assistance. This situation must change. It is encouraging that the government and development partners have at least acknowledged the scale of the problem, which is the first step towards taking effective remedial measures. The Learning Enhancement Strategy piloted in secondary schools to identify and address learning gaps is also a welcome initiative. But far more needs to be done to rebuild foundational learning, including increasing the education budget and ensuring its effective utilisation.

Our education system must move away from rote learning and certificate-based success. Instead, schools should adopt participatory and creative teaching methods that help students develop real-life skills, values, and critical thinking abilities. Education policies should be based on research and the opinions of teachers, experts, parents, and other stakeholders. The government must work to reduce the gap in learning outcomes between rural and urban students. Student-centred teaching, practical teacher training, and curricula connected to real-life needs are all essential for improving learning outcomes. Good policies combined with proper implementation is what will ultimately make the difference. Unless these steps are taken urgently, our children will continue to move through the education system without gaining the basic skills they need.

A reform long overdue

Bringing urban primary healthcare under DGHS must lead to meaningful change

The government's decision to transfer urban primary healthcare services in 12 city corporations and 23 municipalities from the Local Government Division (LGD) to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), along with its plan to establish 170 new urban health centres in Dhaka and Chattogram, marks a turning point for the country's health sector. For decades, urban primary healthcare has remained fragmented, poorly coordinated, and inadequately integrated into the broader public health system. If implemented properly, these initiatives could help address some of the structural weaknesses that have long plagued healthcare in urban areas.

As health experts have pointed out, inefficient governance has long been one of the biggest weaknesses of urban healthcare delivery. While the health ministry oversees primary healthcare nationwide, urban services have remained under the LGD since the launch of the Urban Primary Healthcare Services Delivery Project (UPHCSDP) in 1998. This dual structure has often led to inadequate coordination, overlapping responsibilities, accountability gaps, and uneven service quality. As a result, urban primary healthcare services still remain inaccessible for many, particularly low-income populations who are often forced to rely on overcrowded secondary and tertiary hospitals even for basic treatment. The government's stated goal of reducing dependency on higher-level hospitals through stronger urban primary care is therefore very important. Its plan to establish at least one urban primary health and nutrition centre in every ward of Dhaka North, Dhaka South, and Chattogram city corporations could significantly improve access to healthcare for urban residents. Gradually, similar initiatives should be expanded to other urban areas as well.

Unfortunately, our health sector is already struggling with shortages of doctors, nurses, and technical staff, particularly at the primary care level. Without adequate staffing and operational preparedness, transferring the 192 facilities to the DGHS risks creating further disruption if not handled properly. The transition will require careful planning regarding manpower, financing, infrastructure maintenance, procurement systems, and service continuity.

The government must ensure that there is no disruption in services during the handover process. It must also ensure transparency, accountability, proper oversight, and efficient resource utilisation throughout the transition. Above all, the reforms must remain focused on the needs of urban residents who continue to face barriers to accessing affordable and quality primary healthcare. As the country's urban population is expected to exceed 10 crore by 2050, with Dhaka alone projected to reach nearly three crore residents by 2030, the government can no longer delay prioritising urban healthcare.

Mohammadpur and the reality of urban crimes in Dhaka



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

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

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

There is something quite catchy and seductive in the way Mohammadpur is branded as the "City of God." The phrase is loaded with a Brazilian flavour, conjuring cinematic memories of gang fights in narrow alleys, muggers on motorcycles, the prevalence of narcotics among frightened residents, territorial youth gangs, occasional police raids, and political protection. Some national newspapers have used the phrase to reflect on extortion networks, murders, organised gangs, and the resurgence of Dhaka's underworld economies in recent months.

Without condoning the violence, it is perhaps possible to point out the exaggeration in labelling Mohammadpur as Dhaka's "City of God." A more apt label can be found in Arundhati Roy's maiden novel, *The God of Small Things*, where the caste system is unpacked to reveal the "small gods." Roy's novel pinpoints the intimate tyrannies, invisible humiliations, accumulated exclusions, and ordinary violences as sources for spectacular crimes. The spectacle witnessed in Mohammadpur is not unique. You find similar violence in other city areas on the outskirts, such as Jatrabari, Mirpur and Uttara. Applying the phrase "City of God" to Mohammadpur makes the area appear as a self-contained dystopia at the edge of an otherwise functioning city. The reality is, Mohammadpur is not outside Dhaka's moral order. It is no different from many other parts of the city. Mohammadpur poses as a true mirror where violence has replaced local governance. Thankfully, the city has not yet reached the nadir of becoming the Brazilian favela where state authority has collapsed to make room for gang sovereignty.

Dhaka's crisis consists of small things: local leaders patronising gangs, police conveniently overlooking crimes, landlords housing criminals, narcotics monitors tolerating political substance, students joining groups seeking protection, unemployed youth preferring territorial power to employment, media enjoying clickbait, and policymakers making promises without asking deeper questions. By

extension, they become the "small gods" of the city. They manifest petty sovereignty and quietly regulate urban survival. In Mohammadpur, we have a heavy density that makes the near-dystopian violence more visible. The crime in the area is real, but so is the theatre around it. Locating the city's crime in one area does not provide comfort; it only reflects an ostrich-like satisfaction in viewing the rest of the city as fine.

There are social media reels in which we have seen young muggers roaming the city terminals like sharks in shallow waters with their fins (read: machetes) exposed, snatching mobiles from



'In Mohammadpur, we have a heavy density that makes the near-dystopian violence more visible.'

FILE PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

bus passengers, mugging rickshaw riders and pedestrians, or nicking car parts in plain sight. These are sources of the same fear experienced by Mohammadpur residents. It will be wrong to assume that they enjoy living under the threats of mugging, drugs, gang recruitment, nighttime insecurity, and the erosion of ordinary civic trust. A series of police operations in response to the crime scene has brought Mohammadpur in the limelight. But we also need to be careful in projecting the neighbourhood as a narratively useful trope.

Mohammadpur has been useful in offering visual crime for television, viral geography for social media, and

symbolic disorder for cities. CCTV monitors the heavily grilled houses in Mohammadpur. Yet, the urban density and the narrow lanes allow teen gangs with "funky" names to thrive. The neighbourhood possesses all the necessary elements to be a visually compelling candidate for the "City of God." However, the question persists as to why elite criminality is excluded from the purview of the omniscient being suggested by the metaphor. No upscale neighbourhood is permanently stigmatised because of loan default culture or financial fraud. The economic damage of these crimes may exceed the violence of street gangs many times over.

Street crimes bleed visibly, while elite crimes disperse to become invisible. The former produces spectacular headlines; the latter gets deposited in annual reports. As a daily traveller to Mohammadpur, I find the unequal moral geography of the area intriguing. There is no benefit in marginalising evil in the city's outskirts. This was the same logic through which asylums and brothels

the city gradually teaches its citizens to fear certain places while admiring others who may participate in quieter forms of violence: corruption, labour exploitation, institutional decay, environmental destruction, educational fraud, and exploitative capitalism. Mohammadpur becomes the city's visible sin so that the rest of Dhaka may continue imagining itself innocent.

For a second, think how such portrayal negatively affects the middle class residents. Thousands of students, teachers, drivers, office assistants, vendors, and service workers live in or move through Mohammadpur every day. The area is not external to the intellectual life of the educational institutions there; it sustains it materially. Yet, these institutions face reputational anxiety because of the security advisories, transport warnings, and enhanced surveillance. The time has come to use value-laden terms, such as "City of God," responsibly.

The most dangerous aspect of this metaphor is that it suggests inevitability. It tells us that this neighbourhood has become a natural disaster. But the fact remains: this condition is the result of structural failures contributed by unmanaged urbanisation, youth unemployment, narcotics economies, political patronage, weak local governance, informal settlement pressures, unequal policing, educational exclusion, and the collapse of public recreational and civic infrastructure.

Crime here is not simply moral failure. It is also institutional sediment. Instead of excusing violence, let us change the question. Let us problematise the question, "Why are these people criminal?", and ask, "What urban conditions repeatedly manufacture such ecosystems?"

Mohammadpur has earned its scary reputation by revealing too much of its darker side. But once you shed light on it, it reveals what happens when inequality becomes normal, institutions become selective, youth become excess, and urban belonging becomes disillusioning. Metaphors like the "City of God" can create a safe distance to allow viewers to imagine the location of violence elsewhere. But Mohammadpur is not outside Dhaka's order. It is one of the places where the "small gods" of Dhaka reside. They experience neglect, patronage, exclusion, fear, spectacle, and unequal morality on a daily basis. The ordinary lives of these "small gods" cannot conceal their extraordinary existence.

How policy gaps exclude the visually impaired from work

A first-hand experience



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Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

MD. IQBAL HOSSAIN

Despite the existence of laws and policies, due to a lack of implementation, bureaucratic complexities, and structural limitations, visually impaired individuals are still unable to enter the mainstream workforce. I am a visually impaired person. From the very beginning of my life, I have had to move forward by struggling against adversity. Entering the education system and surviving within it—everything was a continuous battle. Despite the lack of a suitable environment, necessary resources, and trained teachers, I eventually completed my higher education from the Department of Sociology at the University of Dhaka.

However, the real crisis in this story begins after academic life ends and the reality of employment strikes. Even after a visually impaired person overcomes obstacles and becomes educated, the uncertainty standing before them is not merely a personal failure; rather, it is a reflection of the structural failure of the state. Bangladesh's enactment of the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013 is undoubtedly a positive initiative. This law mentions education, employment, accessibility, and equal rights. But the reality is that

the law is largely directive. Although responsibilities are defined, there is no clear mention of punishment or accountability for failure. As a result, the law often remains confined to paper. This weakness is most evident in the field of employment.

Although quotas for persons with disabilities in government jobs exist, their effective implementation is extremely limited. Many institutions fail to fulfil this quota on various pretexts, and no accountability is ensured. In this context, the recently introduced Policy on Scribe Services for Public and Class Examinations, by the Ministry of Public Administration, has sparked new controversy. Although it intends to assist, in reality, it risks becoming a tool that limits the independence of visually impaired individuals. Making a visually impaired candidate dependent on a scribe during job examinations means placing them under additional administrative control. This restricts their personal strength. In many cases, the process is conducted in a way that is neither transparent, reliable, nor respectful to the candidates. As a result, instead of providing support, it creates a bureaucratic complexity where visually impaired individuals

become more dependent on the system than on their own abilities. In a sense, it risks confining them with control rather than empowering them.

On the other hand, the job market is currently facing a severe crisis. This crisis is challenging for general candidates, but it is even more difficult for visually impaired individuals. While general candidates compete for limited

The real crisis begins after academic life ends and the reality of employment strikes. Even after a visually impaired person overcomes obstacles and becomes educated, the uncertainty facing them is not merely a personal failure; rather, it is a reflection of the structural failure of the state.

opportunities, visually impaired individuals fall behind from the very beginning due to structural barriers. In other words, the existing job crisis has created a double deprivation for visually impaired individuals.

First, it is essential to amend the existing law. Punitive provisions must be added to the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013, to ensure accountability and that effective measures are taken against institutions that fail to fulfil their responsibilities. Second, to ensure employment for visually impaired individuals, realistic job opportunities must be created through executive

orders and special measures. A quota-based system alone is insufficient, as the structure of competitive examinations is often unsuitable for visually impaired individuals. In many countries around the world, special recruitment policies are followed for visually impaired individuals, where the recruitment process, work environments, and training methods are designed in accordance with their abilities. The government can create suitable positions for visually impaired individuals in various ministries, departments, and autonomous institutions, such as telephone operators, information service assistants, Braille transcribers, and digital content reviewers, etc., where their skills can be effectively utilised.

Not only recruitment but also making the work environment inclusive is an important responsibility of the state.

Third, the current scribe policy must be reconsidered so that it functions as a genuine means of assistance rather than control. The candidate's independence, choice, and dignity must be given the highest priority. Fourth, the recruitment process must be made technology driven and inclusive, so that visually impaired individuals can directly demonstrate their abilities.

My experience is not an exception; it reflects a broader reality. Now the question is for you: are we willing to accept a society where a person falls behind not because of their disability, but because of the system's inability? Or do we want to build a state where ability is judged, not limitation? The choice is ours; will we remain silent spectators or become agents of change?

West Bengal’s saffron turn and the new reality facing Dhaka



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SHAHAB ENAM KHAN

For 75 years, West Bengal told itself a story: we are the land of Tagore and Vivekananda, of Bankim and Bose, of Amartya Sen and Abhijit Banerjee, of coffee house Marxists and high-minded *bhadralok* secularism. We are too refined for the politics of mandir and masjid. The Partition of 1947? A regrettable necessity inflicted upon us by lesser provinces.

On May 4, 2026, that story died as Suvendu Adhikari beat Mamata Banerjee on her own turf, Bhabanipur, by at least 15,000 votes. The BJP walked away with over 200 of West Bengal's 294 seats, and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) collapsed to roughly 80. The Left and the Indian National Congress remained where they have been parked since 2011: in near oblivion. The Kolkata *bhadralok* society has, at last, found its inner Sanatani. Partition, it turns out, was not a tragedy of misunderstanding; it was a verdict ahead of its time.

This matters for Bangladesh in ways our political elites have yet to absorb. The country is now, geographically, surrounded by the saffron flag. Tripura: BJP. Assam: Himanta Biswa Sarma, who campaigned in West Bengal for Adhikari and vividly spoke of pushing individuals across the border—a phrase that does not appear in any Vienna Convention I know of. Dhaka envisioned the acting Indian high commissioner on April 30 to protest remarks by the Assam CM; four days later, the BJP won West Bengal on precisely that rhetoric. In retrospect, the summons seems only to have goaded the politics it sought to restrain.

So, how did the citadel fall? First, the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voters vaporised nearly nine million voters, roughly 12 percent of the electorate, with a disproportionate impact on Muslim communities. It reminds me of the Bollywood cult Gabbar Singh. *Kitne aadmi the?* Nine million, *sardar*. TMC's most reliable bank was emptied before the first



PHOTO: AFP

BJP party workers parade through the streets of Kolkata on May 4, 2026 after learning of their win in West Bengal legislative assembly election.

ballot was cast. Adhikari helpfully assured Indian Muslims that the SIR would target only Bangladeshi infiltrators, a category whose definition appears to expand with every rally. The Awami League was structurally deaf to all this; the BNP dispensation, judged by the foreign minister's first outing (to India), appears to be auditioning for the role of selfie partner. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Second, the central government deployed 2,400 companies of Central Armed Police Forces—probably the largest paramilitary footprint in any state election in Indian history—supplemented by the National

teachers were hired by what one can only call tombola, and a welfare-dependent economy that printed lakhs of “Lakshmir Bhandar” coupons but very few private-sector jobs—left Mamata's record indefensible. And before any of this, Mamata had spent 15 years weakening the Bengal Congress, the very ally that built her career, leaving herself, in 2026, with no secular flank to fall back on.

Fourth, the post-Hasina collapse of Bangladesh-India ties did the rest. Visa suspensions. Closures at Petrapole-Benapole, the corridor handling 70 percent of bilateral land-based trade. Port restrictions are hitting

underwrote Kolkata New Market, the Park Street economy, and West Bengal's wider SME sector, and the Bangladeshi shoppers, traders, students, and patients on whom Mamata's economy quietly depended, simply collapsed. Mamata could neither lobby Delhi nor offer an alternative. The BJP framed the disruption not as economic mismanagement but as a national security imperative. They spent years blaming her for refusing to give up land for fencing.

Weeks before West Bengal voted, Bangladesh's foreign minister was in Delhi describing the trip as a “goodwill” mission

to take ties in a “new direction.” The new direction, as it happened, was both towards Mauritius with Indian foreign minister as a travel partner to attend an Indian Ocean Conference hosted by India Foundation, and northwards on April 8, while he was still in Delhi, when Ali Hossain of Dhabalguri was shot dead by the BSF at Patgram. Goodwill, one supposes, has a body count. The Awami League looked away from such numbers as the price of patronage; I have yet to understand where our post-July 2024 politicians are heading.

Now consider what awaits the BNP that swept to parliament in Bangladesh's 13th general election in February. Adhikari, likely to be chief minister, told reporters in December last year that Bangladesh should be “taught a lesson like Israel taught Gaza.” This is the BJP's political efficacy on display and the man with whom Dhaka must now discuss water-sharing, border haats, and economy, not to mention the Indians who may soon find themselves stateless. And the Teesta will flow as electorally convenient as the Ganges.

My honest reading, then? India's posture towards Bangladesh will, as usual, be based on selective amnesia and transactionality. And the BJP's domestic electoral product—the eternally menacing Bangladeshi infiltrator—will continue to be manufactured in West Bengal, Tripura, and Assam regardless of what the Indian foreign office murmurs at bilateral dinners. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs does the laundry that I appreciate, though the BJP picks the wardrobe. We must learn to read both the cycle and the spin.

Which means our parliament must do what it has historically refused to do: build a national consensus on a transactional foreign policy that survives the election cycles. Continuity beyond rhetoric. A doctrine, not an emotional mood. Engage all, align with balance, yes, but engage from a foundation that does not crumble amid changes in governments.

West Bengal's *bhadralok* society, or perhaps the Babu Samaj, has finally decided that 1947 was correct. We should grant them the courtesy of believing them and think accordingly. The story West Bengal now tells is one we have heard before, in other languages, on other borders. I hope Dhaka and Delhi read this caution carefully before the next chapter is written on Bangladesh-India relations.

Who profits from Bangladesh’s heritage?



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NAMIA AKHTAR

A weaver in Narayanganj spends months creating a single Jamdani saree. Each motif is placed by hand, each thread carrying generations of knowledge. Thousands of kilometres away, a luxury fashion house releases a collection with strikingly similar patterns and sells them at prices the original artisan could never have imagined. The value travels, while the credit and profit don't. This is no longer just a story of cultural injustice. As Bangladesh awaits graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status, the pertinent economic question is: who owns this country's creative heritage, and who benefits from it?

Jamdani is not an ordinary textile. Recognised by Unesco as part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage, it is one of the most intricate weaving traditions in the world. For centuries, it has been produced—primarily in Rupganj upazila of Narayanganj—by communities whose skills are globally admired but economically undervalued. Variations of these designs circulate in

international markets today with little acknowledgment of their origins. Patterns are adapted, renamed, and resold. A local tradition has become a global commodity, but the artisans remain at the margins of that value chain.

Bangladesh has taken some steps. The Geographical Indication Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 2013, enacted in line with obligations under the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), granted Jamdani the GI status in 2016. But this protection is largely domestic. A GI certificate issued in Dhaka carries little weight in Paris, Milan, or Amsterdam. In the global market, protection that stops at the border is protection in name only. That is precisely why the current moment matters.

A significant shift has taken place in Europe. Under Regulation (EU) 2023/2411, the European Union has introduced a new system to protect craft and industrial products through geographical indications.

For the first time, non-EU countries can apply for protection of textiles, ceramics, and other crafts across all EU member-states through a single registration. Jamdani, Muslin, Nakshi Kantha, and Shital Pati—they all qualify. This is far bigger than an administrative reform; it is a structural opening. A single successful application can secure protection across 27 markets, but Bangladesh has yet to file one.

At the global level, an even more consequential development has emerged. In May 2024, member-states of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) adopted a treaty on intellectual property, genetic resources, and associated traditional knowledge. For the first time, the international intellectual property system requires patent applicants to disclose the origin of genetic resources and, where applicable, associated traditional knowledge used in their inventions. This introduces a principle long demanded by countries of the Global South: that traditional knowledge is not free for the taking. Disclosure requirements create a legal foothold to challenge misappropriation, whether in patents, designs, or derivative products.

The urgency is sharpened by Bangladesh's upcoming LDC graduation. For decades, the country's export model has relied heavily on preferential market access, particularly in ready-made garment exports under schemes linked to the WTO framework and unilateral preferences such as the EU's “Everything But Arms” initiative. When these preferences

phase out, Bangladesh must reposition itself in a more competitive landscape. Its cultural heritage—crafts, designs, and traditional knowledge—is one of the few assets that cannot be easily replicated unless it is protected, recognised, and monetised on its own terms.

The issue extends far beyond Jamdani. Nakshi Kantha embroidery, Shital Pati weaving, terracotta, brass, and bell metal work—these are not just cultural artefacts but repositories of knowledge and identity. In today's global market, where authenticity is a premium, they should command value. Instead, they are often treated as an open-access resource. Reversing this trend requires prompt action.

First, Bangladesh needs a national digital archive of traditional designs. It can be an authoritative repository of motifs, techniques, and patterns. Without documented proof of origin, claims of ownership are difficult to defend internationally. Countries like India have demonstrated how such databases can be used to successfully challenge wrongful patents and claims.

Second, Bangladesh must internationalise its GI strategy. Filing applications under the EU's new CIGI system should be an immediate priority. Protection is not just about preventing misuse but also about establishing market identity and securing long-term value.

Third, and most importantly, Bangladesh must rethink how it values its craft sector.

Artisans are not merely producers of goods; they are creators of intellectual property. The motifs embedded in Jamdani or Nakshi Kantha are design assets. If properly protected, they can be licensed, not just sold.

This is the shift Bangladesh needs to turn from an exporter of labour-intensive goods into the owner of high-value creative assets. In such a model, a Jamdani weaver is no longer at the bottom of a supply chain but part of a creative economy, one where ideas, heritage, and design generate sustained income.

However, none of this will happen without political will. It requires coordination across ministries, investment in institutions, and a clear strategy that links culture with trade. Too often, intellectual property is treated as a technical legal matter. In reality, it is about power. It determines who benefits from creativity, whose knowledge is recognised, and whose labour is rewarded.

Bangladesh faces a choice: it can either remain a supplier of low-cost production, or it can assert ownership over what is uniquely its own. The answer may lie in something as simple, and as complex, as a piece of cloth. A Jamdani saree is not just a product but a history woven into fabric, a form of knowledge passed down through generations. Properly protected, it is also a source of economic resilience. The loom is in Narayanganj, the luxury houses are all over the world. The question is whether Bangladesh can finally claim its share of the value in between.

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Denali setting
7 “Like that’ll happen!”
11 Soup veggie
12 Edit menu choice
13 Fries source
14 Substandard
15 Playground sight
17 School member
20 Himalayan land
23 – Arbor
24 Totally trusted
26 First número
27 Road sealer
28 Cut off
29 The Empire State
31 John, to Ringo
32 Shady spot
33 Sets the price at
34 Lets in
37 Car bar
39 Philippine peninsula
43 Work the land
44 Winter dripper
45 Fall short of
46 Put into piles

DOWN
1 Swiss peak
2 Summer sign
3 Small worker
4 Secret supply
5 Tailed flier
6 Soothing plant
7 Nanny’s kin
8 European flowers
9 Altar words
10 Gift tag word
16 Long-legged bird
17 Animal life
18 Central
19 Projectiles in a winter battle
21 Downloadable read
22 Printing goofs
24 Squall
25 Simple card game
30 Mountain calls
33 Moving about
35 Long-plumed bird
36 Meal in a shell
37 Cash dispenser
38 Clock numeral
40 Play part
41 Pub order
42 Homer’s neighbor

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12-20

YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS

M	E	D	I	A		L	E	A	R	N
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				T	R	A	C	E		
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ESSAY

The quiet burden of love: Silence, separation, and the lives unfulfilled in Tagore

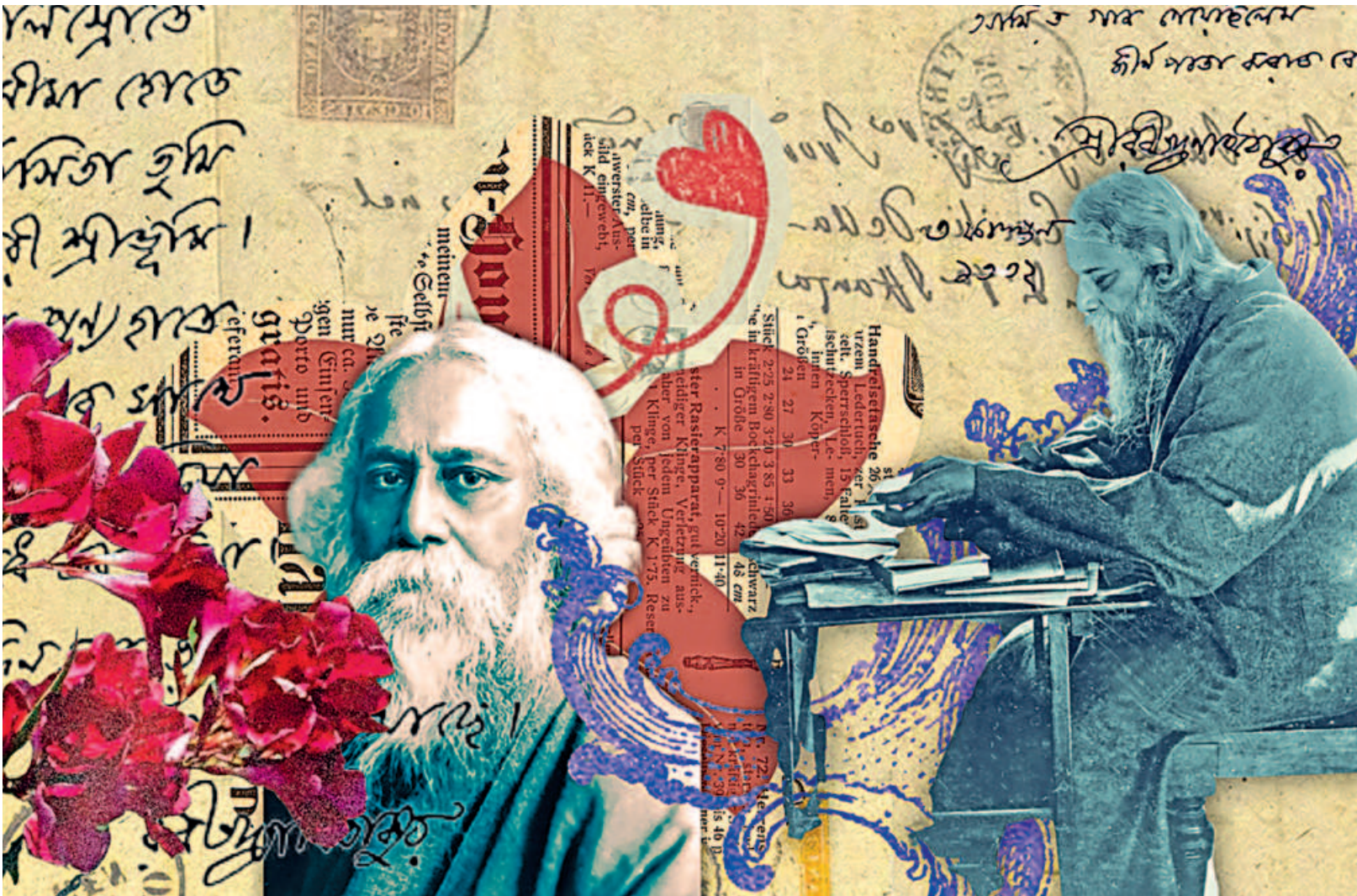


ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

MAHMUDA EMDAD, ABDULLAH JUBAYER

To read Tagore on love is to understand that romance in his world is rarely free. It is always brushing up against something—a family’s expectation, a society’s silence, a lover’s indifference. He does not write love stories so much as he writes what happens to love when the world gets in the way. And yet there is something luminous in these short stories. In them, he achieves something rare: the ability to hold the entirety of human life within a few pages. Yet in these short slices of life, romance arrives in two forms. There is the love for nature—vast, spiritual, almost silently sacred. And then there is the love between people—more fragile, more earthly, and far more painful.

It is this second kind that lingers. There is pining and yearning. There is hesitation in each turning. There are feelings that never find the right moment to be said, and silences that end up saying everything. Subha’s eyes say everything her tongue never could. Charulata’s heart wakes slowly to its own loneliness. Haimanti’s love grows smaller and smaller inside a house that never wanted her. Even Anupam—a man who could not hold on to love when he had it, not because he did not feel it, but because he did not know how to fight for it. Shurbala in “Ekratri” (1892) meets a love that comes only once and leaves just as quietly. That particular ache runs through Tagore’s

short stories like a quiet current. He tried to investigate love and romance both inside and out of the institution of marriage, and the vantage point of society and its written and unwritten norms.

In “Subha” (1893), Tagore places love at the edge of language, where it must find other ways to exist. Subha, being mute, grows up outside the usual exchanges through which people recognise and return affection. What she cannot claim among humans settles elsewhere. The river, the shifting light before a storm, the cattle she tends, the small animals that gather around her—these become part of a world where she is neither questioned nor set aside. It is not that she turns to nature out of choice. It is that, here, she is not made to feel incomplete.

There is a kind of intimacy that forms when one is left out of ordinary belonging. Those who are not heard often learn to read what does not speak back. Subha’s attachments deepen in this way. Her only human companionship comes in brief, almost incidental moments with Pratap, during fishing. It is a space where silence is not a lack but a necessity, and in that shared stillness she finds, perhaps for the first time, a sense of being included, and ever so, expected. Yet even here, the feeling does not carry the same weight for him. What forms in her remains unrecognised on the other side. When she is taken away to Kolkata for marriage, something unsettled

was portrayed in “Ekratri”.

In “Ekratri”, the narrator and Shurbala begin as childhood companions, sharing a closeness that had no name at the time. The narrator moves on, drawn into what time demands of him, into questions of identity and purpose, leaving behind something he does not yet know he will one day need.

Years later, when life begins to feel uncertain again, when the sense of self no longer sits firmly in place, memory brings him back to what he had left unresolved. On a storm-filled monsoon night, he meets Shurbala again. The world outside is restless, and that unrest seems to mirror what has remained within them. She now belongs to another life, one that cannot be reversed or reached. Yet in that brief meeting, something long left behind comes into full view.

Tagore does not turn this into fulfillment. Instead, love and romance remain as understanding. The narrator sees, at last, what his life had been moving past all along. What stands before him is not possibility, but a form of realisation shaped by timing itself. By morning, they part, unchanged in circumstance. What remains is the knowledge that this feeling had always been there, waiting, and that he comes to recognise it only at the moment when time no longer allows it to belong to his life. Some would call this a closure, others would simply choose to name this as a wistful memory.

Apart from the common love triangle trope that we are so accustomed to and maybe experience in our own circles, this story also talks about widow remarriage and presents theoretical conversations and arguments swiftly inside the narrative, with a yearning that is confused between the right course of action. In this space, love is not a simple attraction; it becomes something that struggles against social permission, especially in the case of a widow who still carries the possibility of life, memory, and desire, even when society has already marked her past as closed.

Here, Tagore portrays love and romance as something deeply entangled with hesitation, ethics, and timing. Across Rabindranath Tagore’s short stories, love itself seems to shift alongside the changing social realities of his time, where questions of marriage, widowhood, and personal freedom and agency were slowly entering public thought. Yet across these stories, we also notice how often women love within enclosure and boundaries. Their longing runs as deep as men’s, yet their choices are rarely as free; they endure, hesitate, and sacrifice far more often than they act. Perhaps this reflects the social world Tagore was rendering, though some have asked whether even his sympathy remains touched by a male way of seeing. Or wonder whether it reflects, in part, his own vision of womanhood, where women’s suffering and resignation sometimes seem almost expected. Even so, he makes that suffering impossible to ignore. Their silences wound us so deeply that they begin to feel less like submission, and more like a cry for another world.

In Rabindranath Tagore’s short stories, the purpose of love is not possession, nor fulfilment, but the act of loving itself, a state that moves beyond desire, beyond the hunger to hold. Love, in his world, does not ask to be completed. It asks only to be experienced, to be lived in its own unfolding.

Though his characters breathe through very human emotions, yearning, hesitation, separation, regret, Tagore lifts love gently away from the limits of the human hand. It becomes something inwardly vast, where feeling matters more than outcome, and presence matters more than possession. This is why his lovers often come close, yet never arrive. Life holds them only up to a certain edge, and beyond that, something invisible pulls them apart again. It remains as it is, unfinished, unspoken, carried intimately like something sacred that does not need form to exist. In this way, Tagore’s idea of love finds its final shape, not as completion, but as something preserved beyond reach, almost touched by the divine.

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In Rabindranath Tagore’s short stories, the purpose of love is not possession, nor fulfilment, but the act of loving itself, a state that moves beyond desire, beyond the hunger to hold. Love, in his world, does not ask to be completed. It asks only to be experienced, to be lived in its own unfolding.

begins to take hold within her, a feeling she cannot quite name. It carries the weight of yearning, and also something that, in Bangla, we would simply call obhimaan: a tender, unspoken hurt that comes from feeling deeply and finding no answer in return. She does not simply resist leaving. What troubles her more is that what she feels has no echo. Subha, who has always spoken through her eyes, must now carry this unreturned emotion within her, where it remains, shaping a silence that now holds both love and loss.

What remains after “Subha” is a question that lingers. What happens to love when it is never spoken, never returned, or never even fully understood? In some lives, it exists as a bittersweet memory—a mild crush to share with grandkids, or a passionate memoir of a heartbreak. But sometimes, it does not disappear. It returns, at a time when one has already moved too far ahead to hold it, which

This idea of delayed recognition and misplaced affection continues, but in a more entangled form, in “Protibeshini” (1900). The two closest friends fall for the same widowed neighbour girl, albeit unknowingly. Both of them have their distinct philosophy and approach to love. One of them, the protagonist, yearns for her internally and prefers to preserve his reverence like worship, while the other is more straightforward in his approach. The protagonist has some acumen in poetry, so the poems the other friend writes for her often carry his influence in words and letters, unbeknownst to him about where they are eventually directed.

In a tragic irony of fate, the protagonist finds the identity of his friend’s muse to be the same as his own enchantress, but it is rather too late to reveal that. He does not know who to blame, his inertia, his friend, or the god of love.

POETRY

Rabindranath

SHAHID QADRI

You’re a traffic island in our consciousness,
O Rabindranath!
You stand
as if a golden, powerless policeman,
always lighting your red, yellow, green
signals.
To get to a
small unknown station named Bangladesh,
should I buy
my ticket from you,
selling all my bits and pieces?
In your own land, dear poet, a few of us,
like tourists,
are still drifting
around drugstores.
With a stethoscope, you silently walked away
some time ago,
but among the gloomy untreatable patients
sitting on stools and benches in the corridor,
I was also waiting for you.
O visionary doctor, didn’t you receive
my postcard
from our post office?

I wrote a bunch of letters
in pellucid words,
describing all the ailments with care.
You turned a blind eye, yet since perceptions
were auspicious,
I assumed you’re an almirah
of colorful sleeping tablets.
I returned home fearlessly
at the alarming and panic-stricken night,
silently went to bed and fell on the back
without changing dresses,
witnessed luminous stars the entire night,
as if medicine bottles,
falling in drops
on the deaf footpath
sans lips and palates and tongues.
We know you’re neither a doctor
nor a salesman in a drugstore!
At the beginning of the day,
you’re in the depth of our heart,
a breakfast served on a table after a sleepless
night;
you’re deep within our intellect and bones,
veins and hearts



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

ambuscading like
a hunting cat,
taking away all our golden and silvery fish.
Like Robin Hood, you looted
our embarrassed emporiums and blasted
banks
and then distributed all the money
among the penniless and the wretched.
Breaking away from the procession,
I’ve been fluttering a glittering note of taka,
as if playing a guitar,
with my deft fingers,
and—
in the park at night, you’re my last restaurant
disseminating light.

Translated by Mohammad Shafiqul Islam.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Najmul Hossain Shanto became the first Bangladeshi captain to score a Test century against Pakistan, reaching 101 off 130 balls on the opening day of the first of two Tests in Mirpur yesterday.

Shanto and Mominul Haque's 170-run stand is the highest ever third-wicket stand by Bangladesh in a Test against Pakistan.

Since his Test debut in 2017, Shanto has scored nine centuries, the joint-highest alongside Mushfiqur Rahim and Mominul Haque among Bangladesh batters during the same period.

Shanto is also third overall among cricketers with 2,000-plus Test runs in terms of converting fifties into hundreds. With a conversion rate of 64.29%, the left-hander is behind only Australia's Don Bradman (69.05) and West Indies' George Headley (66.67).

Bangladesh ended the day at 301 for four in 85 overs, marking their highest total in a single day against Pakistan in any Test. This surpassed their previous best of 289 runs on Day 3 of the first Test in Rawalpindi in 2024, a series that Bangladesh went on to win 2-0.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

After Pakistan pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi and Hasan Ali struck with two quick wickets, reducing Bangladesh to 31 for two in 10.1 overs, the hosts bounced back through a 170-run third-wicket stand between skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mominul Haque on Day 1 of the first Test in Mirpur yesterday. Shanto notched his ninth Test century, while Mominul fell just nine runs short of his own milestone. Together, the duo helped Bangladesh reach a strong position, setting several records along the way.

Shanto dominates with controlled aggression

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Aggression is one thing, but controlled aggression is a different kind of menace. Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto's century against Pakistan on Friday in Mirpur on Day 1 of the first of two Tests, part of the World Test Championship, was a perfect example of the latter.

Shanto's measured aggression not only unsettled Pakistan in Dhaka's sweltering heat but also showcased his masterful construction of an innings on a pitch offering something for the pacers. Not only did Shanto pick up his first-ever Test ton against Pakistan and his ninth in Tests, he did it exhibiting a conversation-rate unheard of in modern cricket.

When Shanto walked in, Bangladesh were under pressure after the early dismissals of their openers. His first boundary immediately signaled his intent: standing a few metres outside the crease, he drove Mohammad Abbas beautifully through the on-side, the kind that provided a glimpse of the purple patch he is on. When Shanto is in this kind of touch, it often turns into a commanding day at the crease.

He had his favourite Test batting partner, Mominul Haque, by his side, with whom he has recorded two of the three highest third-wicket stands for Bangladesh in the format. "I think Shanto's innings

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH VS PAKISTAN

1st Test, Day 1

Bangladesh 1st innings: 301 for 4 in 85 overs (Shanto 101, Mominul 91, Mushfiqur 48 not out, Litton 8 not out; Abbas 1-51, Shaheen 1-67, Hasan 1-54)

is one of the best I've seen from him. I enjoyed the way he dominated from the beginning," Mominul reflected on the captain's influence in difficult conditions.

Shanto also became the first Bangladesh captain to score a Test century against Pakistan. The hallmark of his innings was controlled aggression -- a hunger for runs that seems to be growing. In his last eight innings, he has scored four centuries. Overall, in 14 innings where he passed fifty, he has converted nine into hundreds, an astonishing conversion rate of 64.2 percent.

"Shanto has a hunger for runs, and he wants to give his best for the side. Someone has to build these records, which others will break in the future," Mominul added.

Shanto had previously shared with this newspaper, "Whenever I bat, my focus is always on scoring runs. If you bat with positive intent, you create more scoring opportunities." He displayed exactly that

approach with fluency, patience, and authority.

Pakistan pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi, Mohammad Abbas, and Hasan Ali tested him thoroughly. Shaheen moved the ball early, Abbas challenged him from awkward lengths, and Hasan provided skiddy deliveries. Shanto responded to each with intelligent shot selection: driving straight off Shaheen, adjusting his stance to counter Abbas' swing and movement, and comfortably pulling Hasan when required. His 130-ball 101 was a masterclass in reading conditions and adapting on the fly.

The cover drive off Abbas that brought up his ninth century was a treat, like many of his strokes. His celebration reflected just how much it meant. Yet, on the very next delivery, he was dismissed leg before to Abbas -- much to Pakistan's relief, as he had looked on course for a bigger score. Perhaps the slightly prolonged celebration disrupted his focus -- a small area he could work on in the future.

"To maintain this rhythm, it's important to keep the same mentality. You can't be too confident or too deflated," Mominul noted.

For Shanto, as evidenced by his numbers, the hunger is only building. With each innings, he is not just scoring runs; he is staking his claim as a leader and a batter capable of shaping Bangladesh's future in the format.

BFF to finalise head coach by Sunday

SPORTS REPORTER

The wait for Bangladesh's next national football team head coach is expected to end within the next few days, with the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) set to make a final decision on Sunday.

The BFF National Teams Committee, headed by president Tabith Awal, has already interviewed five of the 11 shortlisted candidates and plans to complete the remaining interviews by Saturday before finalising the appointment.

"Interviews of the selected 11 coaches are being conducted online. The NTC has already interviewed five coaches and will interview the remaining six today and tomorrow. We are likely to take the final decision at the executive committee meeting, which is the final stage of the recruitment process," Tabith told reporters at the Physical Education College in Mohammadpur following Notun Kuri Sports talent hunt programme on Friday.

"Our target is to finalise the coach by Sunday and sign a contract with him by May 15," he added.

Tabith said the BFF had followed a transparent recruitment process, having initially received around 230 applications before reducing the list to 100, then 23, and finally 11 candidates for the last round of interviews.

Amid concerns that financial limitations could prevent the BFF from appointing a high-profile coach, Tabith insisted the federation remained ambitious.

"Budget is not just about how much is being paid, rather it is about what we are investing and what we are receiving in return. Finance is important, but it will likely be the last criteria in hiring a high-profile coach," he said.

Responding to a question on local coaches, Tabith said: "We are very open to evaluating local coaches for these positions. We want to confirm the assistant coach, goalkeeping coach and fitness coach once we select the head coach of the national team."

33 GOALS DAYS LEFT



Europe's footballing might

Among the 55 current member nations of UEFA, Europe's top football governing body, 33 have played in the World Cup. For the upcoming 2026 edition, 16 teams from UEFA will participate. Notably, 11 of those have the experience of playing in a World Cup semifinal.

****Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'Brehme's penalty: The moment Maradona's Argentina fell silent'**

Bylaws fiasco stretches BFL clash to nearly three hours

SPORTS REPORTER

The high-stakes Bangladesh Football League clash between holders Bashundhara Kings and Bangladesh Police on Friday was overshadowed by a lengthy interruption caused by confusion over the eligibility of foreign players.

What should have been a routine 90-minute contest at the Bashundhara Kings Arena eventually stretched close to three hours before ending in a 1-1 draw.

The controversy began after Police replaced Brazilian forward Paulo Henrique -- who had been sent off after receiving a second yellow card -- with fellow Brazilian Danilo Azevedo.

Kings captain Topu Barman immediately objected, claiming the substitution violated league regulations regarding foreign players.

According to the bylaws, teams are allowed to field a maximum of three foreign players in a match, while foreign players may also replace other foreign players during play.

Police FC argued their decision was valid, citing a similar incident during their match against PWD on May 1, when PWD were permitted to introduce Ghanaian forward Kofi Junior after Brazilian

Jonathan Santos had been sent off.

The dispute led to a suspension of around 75 minutes before Police eventually withdrew Danilo and continued the match with only two foreign players for the remaining 27 minutes.

The lengthy stoppage appeared to disrupt the rhythm of both teams, who failed to find a winner after Henrique had cancelled out Dorielton Gomes' 35th-minute opener in the 53rd minute.

The whole scenario once again exposed the poor officiating in the top-tier domestic football as there was no red flag raised since the previous incident on May 1.

The draw at the Kings Arena, meanwhile, allowed title rivals Abahani to close the gap at the top of the table to just one point after a 2-0 win over PWD SC at Shaheed Barkat Stadium.

Souleymane Diabate and Shah Quazem Kirmanee scored for Abahani, who moved to 34 points from 16 matches, one behind leaders Bashundhara Kings.

Meanwhile, Fortis FC strengthened their third position with a commanding 7-1 victory over Fakirerpool Young Men's Club. Pa Omar Babou struck four times, while Onyekachi Okafor added a brace and Ananta Tamang scored the other goal as Fortis climbed to 31 points from 16 matches.



PHOTO: STAR

Hamza Choudhury signs an autograph for a young kid during a Notun Kuri Sports talent hunt programme for budding cricketers in Dhaka at the Government Physical Education College ground in Mohammadpur yesterday. The event was also attended by State Minister for Youth and Sports Aminul Haque and Bangladesh Football Federation president Tabith Awal. Meanwhile, Hamza, the Leicester City and Bangladesh football team star, will leave the country today following a five-day trip.



No buses for 18 lakh residents of Khulna city

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

For Moniruzzaman Jamaddar, a resident of Damodar village in Phultala upazila, memories of student life in Khulna are inseparable from the once-vibrant bus services that connected the city with its outskirts.

The 59-year-old NGO official recalls how, in the early 1980s, he would travel nearly 23 kilometres daily to attend classes at Khulna City College and later at Khulna Commerce College.

"Buses would leave every five minutes from Phultala to Rupsha ghat and stop at more than 20 points. They were often packed with passengers," he told The Daily Star.



For students, the fare was as low as one taka. "It was not just public transport – it was part of our life," he reminisced.

But all this is now a distant memory.

Khulna, a city of nearly 1.8 million people, now has no bus service. For the residents – especially students and low- to middle-income groups – the absence of city buses has turned daily commute into an expensive and stressful ordeal.

The gap has been filled by three-wheelers, including CNG-run and battery-powered auto-rickshaws and easy bikes. With fuel prices rising, fares have been increased by up to 20 percent in recent weeks, adding to commuters' financial strain.

Residents say that travelling from one end of the city to the other now costs between Tk 150 and Tk 200 – a sum many find unaffordable on a daily basis.

Dipa Banerjee, a student of Khulna Government Girls' College, said, "The distance from Phultala to Rupsha ferry ghat via the dak bungalow is 26 kilometres. If I share an auto-rickshaw ride with someone, I have to pay Tk 70 for the journey," she said, adding that had

there been a city bus service, the fare would have been much lower.

"It is essential to introduce bus services from Phultala to Khulna city and on four to five other routes," she said.

Akmol Hossain, a jute mill worker from Rupsha upazila, said, "The three-wheeler drivers' union raised fares on April 5, citing fuel price hikes. I have to pay an additional Tk 10 daily to reach my workplace at Phultala from Rupsha after the fare was increased to Tk 70."

According to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) documents, around 1,250 three-wheelers registered with BRTA operate on the Khulna-Phultala route.

WHY DID BUSES DISAPPEAR?

In the 1990s, more than 60 buses were run by private operators on various routes, including those from Rupsha to Phultala and Shahpur. Students from Jashore and even Narail used to travel via Phultala to BL College, Khulna Commerce College, and Khulna Government Girls' College, say locals.

Many people from Fakirhat, Mollahat, Rampal, Mongla and other places in Bagerhat relied on these bus services to commute to the city.

"Back then, this was the main mode of transport for lower- and middle-income people," said Rahmat Ali, who worked as a bus conductor for 15 years.

As recently as 2005, around 50 buses operated within the city, serving as affordable and reliable transport.

But things started changing rapidly after 2010 when CNG- and diesel-run three-wheelers hit the roads in big numbers.

By 2017, the number of city buses dropped to just five before completely going off the road in August 2018.

Meanwhile, in 2016, BRTC

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto celebrates his ninth Test century -- and his first against Pakistan -- with his trademark leap on Day 1 of the first Test of the two-match series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. His 130-ball 101 also made him the first Bangladesh captain to score a Test century against Pakistan, helping the Tigers finish the day strongly at 301/4 in 85 overs.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BNP moves to restore grassroots discipline

Tarique to sit with leaders today

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

BNP Chairman and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will sit with grassroots leaders today as the ruling party seeks to restore discipline and strengthen its organisational structure.

Party leaders said there is no formal agenda for the meeting, but they expect the party chief to issue a strict warning to leaders across the country to follow party rules and avoid any activities that could damage its image or give the opposition any scope to criticise it.

The meeting, to be held at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh auditorium in Dhaka's Farmgate, may also give local leaders a chance to discuss the government's activities, problems in their areas, internal conflicts, and weaknesses within their respective units.

Party insiders said grassroots leaders will likely tell Tarique that the selection of new leadership for committees whose terms have expired should proceed through elections.

This will be his first such meeting with grassroots leaders since becoming prime minister and the BNP's return to power, said Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, PM's political affairs adviser.

Presidents, general secretaries, conveners, and member secretaries of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

JOURNALISM CONFERENCE 2026

Editorial autonomy key to investigative journalism

Speakers urge media houses to resist pressure, protect reporters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Establishing strong editorial institutions and resisting financial and political pressures are essential for the survival and growth of investigative journalism, speakers said at an event yesterday.

The remarks came at a session of the

The survival of a media house depends entirely on the autonomy and integrity of its editorial team... Unless you trust your editor and his team to do good journalism, there is no way a media house can flourish.

Investigative journalism is the only element that distinguishes one news house from another. Democracy needs defenders, and our investigative reporters and editors stand bravely on the front line.

Zaffar Abbas
Editor of Dawn

Michael Cooke
Former editor of Toronto Star

of its editorial team. Meanwhile, management and publishers' support is crucial.

"Unless you trust your editor and his team to do good journalism, there is no way a media house can flourish," he said.

Calling the exposure of corruption "a kind of public service", he warned that self-censorship is often more damaging than direct censorship,

as media outlets cannot publicly admit to it.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said a strong editorial institution is a precondition for independent and investigative journalism.

"An editor should not be a PRO [public relations officer] of the owner. While owners have a role, there must be a distinction between

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

PMO cell to track MPs' dev pledges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Prime Minister's Office has formed a special cell to ensure quick and effective implementation of the promised and expected programmes of members of the parliament.

The decision was announced in a PMO notification issued yesterday.

According to the notification, signed by Nohemia Jamil, director administration at the PMO, the cell has been formed to strengthen inter-ministerial coordination and ensure transparency and accountability. The order will take effect immediately, it said.

The seven-member cell will be headed

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ERRATUM

In the report headlined "West Bengal assembly dissolved" published on Page 12 yesterday, content from another report was mistakenly used. The error has been fixed on our website. We sincerely apologise for the mistake.



PHOTO: ABRAR FAIYAZ NILOY

Chhayanaut students perform during the first day of two-day "Rabindra Utsab 1433" at its auditorium in Dhaka yesterday. Story on Page 3.

US trade court rules Trump tariffs illegal

Blocks levies for three importers

REUTERS, New York

A US trade court dealt another blow to President Donald Trump's tariff strategy, ruling that his latest 10 percent temporary global duties are unjustified under a 1970s trade law, but blocked the levies only for two private importers and the State of Washington.

The US Court of International Trade's 2-1 decision leaves the temporary tariffs in place for all other importers while any appeal by the Trump administration plays out. They are expected to expire in July.

The court ruled that Trump's imposition of the tariffs under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 was misguided. One of the judges said it was premature to grant victory to the plaintiffs.

While the ruling applies to a set of levies due to expire in about two months, it marks another major setback for Trump's global tariff ambitions and comes a week before he is due to discuss trade tensions with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing.

Inside the perilous world of SUNDARBANS HONEY COLLECTORS

A livelihood shaped by bees, tides and tiger-haunted forest

DIPANKAR ROY

A wooden boat rocks on dark tidal waters, its hull brushing mangrove roots as dawn thins over the Sundarbans. On the boat, men sit barefoot and alert, eyes fixed on the green shadows. Somewhere above them, wild bees cling to a hive heavy with honey.

As spring unfolds, khalsi, goran and keora trees burst into bloom, drawing millions of bees into work. Deep inside the forest, honey ripens inside massive hives clinging to branches.

Their method is disciplined. One person stays behind on the boat while the remaining five spread through the forest at calculated distances. They remember where hives existed in previous seasons. Sometimes, they locate one simply by listening to the faint hum of bees that gives away its presence.

"I've known this forest since birth," Gazi says. "My father survived on it. I entered the forest with him when I was only five or six years old. Now my eldest son is 10, and he has already begun coming with me."

water. Walking becomes difficult, and sharp breathing roots pose a serious risk of injury. Yet, the very high tides bring a strange relief. "When the water rises up to our necks, tigers are less likely to attack," one moual says.

Khokon Mondol, a moual from Baliadanga village in Koyra, says illegal harvesting causes heavy losses. "A mature hive gives five to seven kilogrammes of honey. But when thieves cut it early, we get barely 500 grammes."

Cyclones like Sidr, Aila and Amphan have disrupted the forest's natural cycles, destroying habitats of both bees and mouals. Each year, honey hunters enter the forest not knowing whether they will return with enough to feed their families.

"We used to get three times more honey 20 years ago," he laments. "Now we roam for days and return with half-empty buckets. The flowers don't bloom like they used to."

Honey hunting is regulated by the Forest Department. Mouals apply for passes to enter designated areas in groups. The system is meant to protect both forest and collectors, but it often becomes a source of exploitation. Passes are sometimes delayed or denied without clear reasons, while bribes are alleged to be common. Mouals must also sell a fixed percentage of their harvest to government cooperatives at set prices, often below the market rate.

"After all our risks, we sell honey for Tk 350-400 per kg to the department, but it sells for Tk 1,000-1,500 or more in the cities," says Khokon.

Many mouals are indebted to local moneylenders or traders who finance forest trips in exchange for a large share of the honey. Healthcare support is almost absent during expeditions, and injuries can go untreated for days. "If someone gets hurt badly, we carry him on the boat and sail for hours to reach a village with a pharmacy," says Khokon.

Among the honey collectors is a man known as Tarzan, not his real name, but one earned through reputation. His companions say he swims across wide channels without fear of crocodiles.

Accompanying Tarzan's six-member team from Kalabogi Forest Station, this reporter witnessed the search firsthand.

The team walked nearly five kilometres barefoot through dense forest, scanning treetops and listening for the telltale hum. After crossing a small river, they found a large hive yielding more than seven kilogrammes of honey, but only after enduring countless bee stings.

Three types of honeybees are commonly found in the Sundarbans. The largest yields come from a species, *Apis dorsata*, which builds massive hives on horizontal branches deep inside the forest, often several feet above high-tide water levels.

Bees feeding on khalsi flowers produce the highest-quality honey, prized for its flavour and medicinal value. Once a hive is located, mouals cover their faces with cloth and light bundles of hental leaves to produce smoke. They cut the hive carefully, ensuring that the queen bee and larvae remain unharmed.

A single mature hive can yield up to ten kilogrammes of honey if harvested properly. Wax is also collected. Yet both honey and wax are sold at meagre prices. In a good season, a team may collect up to 100 kilogrammes of honey. In a bad one, they return with barely a barrel.

Even if mouals survive wild animals, climate change presents another challenge. Rising sea levels and increasing salinity in rivers and soil affect the flora and fauna of the Sundarbans. As more areas become saline, flowering patterns change, directly affecting honey production.

Forest Department data show fluctuating honey production: 71,811 kilogrammes in 2015-16, generating Tk 1.48 million; 444,800 kilogrammes in 2019-20, with Tk 3.33 million in revenue; 318,038 kilos in 2023-24, generating a record Tk 5.08 million; and 207,150 kilos in 2024-25, with revenue falling to Tk 3.31 million. During the 2024-25 fiscal year, 2,858 mouals entered the Sundarbans under 437 permits across Khulna and Satkhira ranges.

The Bangladesh portion of the Sundarbans spans 6,017 square kilometres, nearly 31 percent of which is water. Around 450 rivers and canals support 210 fish species and 24 shrimp varieties, along with dolphins, turtles, crocodiles, and monitor lizards, while the forest is also home to the Royal Bengal Tiger and Chital deer. Each year, approximately 12,000 permits are issued for resource extraction, many for crab collection.

Conservationists remain divided. Some argue that honey collection should continue, as it deepens human connection with the forest. Others support moving mouals towards domesticated beekeeping for safer, sustainable income.

For over 15 years, the non-government organisation BEDS has worked on Sundarbans' honey. Md Maksudur Rahman, chief executive of BEDS, believes the honey has global potential. "If harvested, processed, and marketed following international standards, Sundarbans' honey could become a global brand," he says. "Properly done, it could sell for Tk 60,000-70,000 per kg."

Sundarbans West Divisional Forest Officer AZM Hasnur Rahman says permits for honey collection date back to 1886. "We are training mouals to ensure sustainable harvesting while protecting the ecosystem," he says.

Despite the growing challenges, the honey collectors of the Sundarbans return each year, guided by ancestral knowledge, hope and the rhythm of nature. Their journey is not just about harvesting honey. It is about resilience, tradition and survival in one of the world's most unique and vulnerable ecosystems.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

VEILED HUNGER

How mothers remain victims to gender-driven nutrient shortages in Bangladesh

Who is responsible for Bangladesh's maternal malnutrition crisis? Is it just a crisis of food availability, or is it our negligence of its gendered origins? The country produces enough food to feed its population, but patriarchal household dynamics ensure that mothers absorb the deficit in times of crisis.

FABI HUDA

This was the first time I was visiting Lalmonirhat, excited to see how the urban/peri-urban living structure differed from what I was used to seeing in Dhaka city, with a goal of examining whether the children in the region are eating well. The first two years of a child's life, along with the time spent in the womb, constitute the critical first 1000 days of a child's life, as they determine the foundation for the child's cognitive growth into adulthood. The nutritional status during this period is assessed using Infant and Young Child Feeding practice indicators globally, looking at exclusive breastfeeding (only for 0–6-month-old children), minimum acceptable diet, and overall dietary diversity for children aged 0–23 months. While there are a total of 17 recommended indicators according to WHO/UNICEF recommendations, these do not include Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W).

Despite its ability to positively impact childhood malnutrition indicators, societal and scientific priorities have sidelined MDD-W as a complementary indicator. When you ask the average Bangladeshi mother if she is aware of what she needs to feed her children, she often demonstrates awareness of the child's protein and vitamin needs from various sources, underscoring the importance of calorie-rich foods for development as well. She might also be aware of the types of foods she needs to eat during pregnancy and while breastfeeding, but the chances are that her knowledge does not directly translate into practice.

During the fieldwork, we visited many homes, particularly during lunch times. We saw plates of food assembled for a child placed in front of the mother, while her own sat beside it, almost neglected as she fed her child. Whether it was a breastfeeding mother or one introducing new foods to her



PHOTOS: FABI HUDA

6–8-month-old child, the women often neglected their own sustenance for their child. A common sight, even in households in urban Lalmonirhat, was heaped plates of rice, accompanied by a small green chilli and some salt. You see the same in the slums of Dhaka city: mothers who return after hours of domestic work end their days with a plate of white rice and maybe some daal, considering it sufficient sustenance for themselves.

“Why are you only eating rice?” I've asked many women, and received a similar answer from most: “Etai baki chilo... Ki aar korbo.” (This is all that was left... What more can be done?) Always coupled with a dejected laugh, as if this were the norm—as a mother and the wife of the household. And while the children in these households were eating well, with plates decorated with eggs and a side of vegetables, it was striking to see the mothers resign themselves to a simple plate of

carbohydrates.

Bangladesh's nutrition policies have reduced child stunting impressively but have largely failed to confront the gender dynamics that keep mothers malnourished. Nearly three-quarters of Bangladeshi women of reproductive age are deficient in more than one essential micronutrient, even as the country celebrates dramatic reductions in visible underweight. While caloric hunger is no longer a concern, deficiency in essential micronutrients is the main culprit behind detrimental health outcomes for women and the children they bear. This deficiency, or “hidden hunger”, persists because its root causes are deeply gendered: women eat last, eat least, and eat the poorest-quality food in their own households, because patriarchal norms present maternal self-sacrifice as a virtue.

Moreover, food taboos strip protein from pregnant women's plates during pregnancy. As studies note, many

women report at least one food restricted by family elders during pregnancy, with nearly half being forced to adhere to these taboos. White carp is avoided because it supposedly causes convulsions in the baby. Trout is believed to cause speech disorders. Duck meat will give the baby a “harsh voice”. Eggs will make the baby too large, necessitating a caesarean section the family cannot afford. Mrigal fish is believed to cause epilepsy. Even traditional beliefs mirroring those of other cultures, such as the Chinese medicine hot/cold classification system, persist. Pregnancy is considered a “hot” condition requiring avoidance of “hot” foods, which can raise the body's temperature. This leads to families avoiding protein-rich items, including fish, fowl, and lentils. In fact, amongst certain indigenous communities in Khagrachari, studies have identified 64 distinct food items classified as taboo during pregnancy.

in childhood and leads to women's lifelong poor nutritional status.” One of the factors that forces the persistence of this gender order is the economic depravity faced by many families, which leads to unequal distribution of food. Food inflation reached 12.56% in October 2023, driven by the aftershocks of the Russia-Ukraine war, currency depreciation, and supply disruptions. WFP monitoring found that 30% of low-income households were food insecure in late 2023, with more than six in ten households adopting harmful coping strategies. In fact, during food crises, mothers absorbed the shock: they reduced both the quantity of their food intake and the quality and diversity of what they consumed in order to feed their children and husbands.

So, the question arises: who is responsible for Bangladesh's maternal malnutrition crisis? Is it just a crisis of food availability, or is it our negligence of its gendered origins? The country produces enough food to feed its population, but patriarchal household dynamics ensure that mothers absorb the deficit in times of crisis. Unless Bangladesh confronts the gendered power structures within its own households, its impressive nutrition gains will continue to leave mothers behind. There needs to be a stronger push from technical experts as well as policymakers to dismantle these beliefs systematically. Incorporating the expectation of gender equity within family dynamics into our education system and the daily lives of our youth will encourage children to look after their mothers, and to learn to respect family members who have generationally sacrificed their own well-being.



Children playing nearby while Mother is engaged in drying wheat after harvest.

The gender order, as Levay et al. write, “disadvantages women through gendered food allocation that often privileges males, which results in an inequitable distribution that can begin

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Living on the edge

How monsoon turns coastal life into survival

RAFIQUL MONTU

Before the start of the disaster season, there is a rush of house changes along the coast. People on the banks of the Meghna River are busy repairing their houses. Many people strengthen their houses to make them storm-resistant. People in vulnerable areas take many more steps to avoid the risks of the monsoon and to protect themselves from river erosion. Still, they face suffering. Their time of vulnerability passes through various crises.

‘This is our fight for survival. The monsoon brings great hardship to us. We prepare every year in anticipation of the disaster season. Our ancestors also fought to survive like this; we are doing the same. Our next generation may also survive like this.’ Selim Mollah (50) a resident of Kalkini village in Kamalnagar upazila of Lakshmipur district, was explaining his crisis.

This is not just Selim Mollah's problem. Millions of people living along the 710-kilometre coastline of Bangladesh face the same problem. The monsoon brings a different kind of crisis for them. They know that during this time, storms will hit, houses will be swept away by tidal waves, and the damage will increase. They have lost a lot of wealth in this way for ages. Unless a cyclone hits, government or NGO assistance does not come. But small disasters cause a lot of damage to these marginalised people.

Jahangir Hossain (55) a resident of Dhalchar Island in Bhola district, spent one lakh taka to fix his house before the monsoon arrived this year. Ibrahim Mia (58) of Dhalchar, spent the same amount of money to fix his house. But both of them had to move their houses at the beginning of the storm season.

Statistics show that the scale of this disaster has increased more than before due to climate change. Despite various initiatives, it is not possible to reduce the damage or alleviate the fear. Just as the people of the coast were in fear ten to twenty years ago, they still have the same fear. They are not able to live safely and peacefully on the margins. Every year, huge amounts of coastal resources are damaged due to tidal waves.

Uncertain Life

Before the start of the disaster season, the sound of crying was coming from a house on the banks of the Meghna River. The surrounding air became heavy with the cries of men and women. Before the monsoon, a member of the family was saying goodbye to his family for what could be the last time. This was their cry of separation. The village's almost 50-year-old house had to be moved from the banks of the Meghna before the storm season. Some of the seven families in the house have already moved elsewhere. The families are getting separated; the long-standing bonds of



1. A family faces a precarious future after losing their home to relentless river erosion. The search for a new place to settle remains a constant worry for those displaced. Photo from Ludhua village in Kamalnagar, Lakshmipur. 2. During the monsoon, the intensity of river erosion escalates, causing entire villages to disappear into the water. This recurring cycle of destruction continues to reshape the coastline. Photo taken from Dhalchar Dwip in Charfason upazila of Bhola. 3. For the inhabitants of this island, the arrival of the monsoon signals a period of heightened anxiety. As the weather worsens, resource crises and living challenges multiply. Photo taken from Dhalchar Dwip in Charfason upazila of Bhola.

PHOTOS: RAFIQUK ISLAM MONTU

these traditional families are breaking.

This scene was in Charjagabandhu village of Kamalnagar, an upazila adjacent to the Meghna in Lakshmipur district. The existence of this traditional village is now almost extinct. Many people have been forced to leave the village and move elsewhere.

Such heartbreaking incidents during the danger period are not limited to this one house. This scene is common in the villages on the banks of the Meghna, and even across the entire coast. Visiting the villages of Char Falkon, Ludhua Bazar, Char Jagabandhu, Kalkini Motirhat and other areas on the banks of the Meghna in Kamalnagar upazila, one can see that many people are changing their homes ahead of the monsoon and storm season. Some are moving their roofs and fences to other places. Some are cutting down old trees and selling them at throwaway prices. The house plots, ponds, relatives' graveyards, gardens – everything is falling into the grip of erosion. Farmers lose their agricultural land. Rich families become poor. Many people are forced to change their profession. A silent crisis engulfs the people on this margin.

‘Our fear increases during the danger period. The Meghna swallows up village after village. I have lost everything in my life to the Meghna. The Meghna has made me homeless. Finally, I started life from scratch. Life is going

on in uncertainty,’ said Kamrul Hasan Mir, 40, a resident of Ludhua village.

Increasing misery

According to the calendar, the storm season begins on March 15 and ends on October 15. During these seven months, people on the coast face various types of disasters. The islands on the coast are mostly submerged in water. Houses are swept away by sudden waves. Many people become homeless and take shelter near embankments. Many people are devastated by storms. Yet, homeless people dream of living again and building houses. Now, coastal people are in such a period of fear. This period is called the ‘danger period’. This period comes repeatedly, making many people cry. There are fears that this crisis will increase in the future due to the impact of climate change.

The World Bank's report titled ‘Bangladesh: Enhancing Coastal Resilience in a Changing Climate’ has highlighted various risks of climate change on the coast. It says that 27 percent of people in the coastal areas of Bangladesh are currently at risk of flooding. This risk of coastal flooding may increase to 35 percent in the current century. Currently, coastal areas suffer losses of about 3,000 crore taka annually due to floods. Cyclones cause losses of about 10,000 crore taka. Due to rising sea levels, the number of losses

in Bangladesh may double in the current century.

Disasters not only destroy homes or land, but also cause extensive damage to natural resources. These natural resources are also the main means of livelihood for many people. During this danger period on the coast, various types of disasters, including cyclones, tidal waves, waterlogging, and erosion, occur.

Preparation is weak

According to field sources, many people in remote villages along the 710-kilometre coastline still live in fear of natural disasters. Fear increases when tidal waters rise, when tidal waves occur, and when cyclone signals are issued. From Shahparir Island in Teknaf on the east coast to Kalinchi village in Shyamnagar on the west coast, many places are in a precarious situation. In a very short period of time, Cyclone Amphan took a terrifying form, increasing the fear of the people of the marginal villages on the coast. Five coastal island upazilas and 18 island unions are at risk.

Mehedi Hasan Liton, Union Parishad Member of Kalkini Union, Kamalnagar, Lakshmipur, said, “The coast is not able to prepare for this time of risk. The old houses built over the years have to be moved from one place to another due to natural disasters. The government is as active in broadcasting

cyclone signals as it is across the country, but there is no such government initiative to reduce the damage caused by river erosion and tidal waves.”

Sharif Hossain, a businessman from Dhalchar, said, ‘Dhalchar Island Union is almost lost due to erosion little by little every year. This island no longer has the capacity to withstand the impact of the monsoon. Every year, many people are forced to move from here to other places. But there is no government initiative to rehabilitate the displaced people.’

Residents of Jagabandhu village said that at one time, the distance from their village to the Meghna River was about ten kilometres. They earned their living by farming their own land. They never thought that they would have to leave their homes. But fate forced them to change their homes. However, no proper initiatives have been taken to prevent river erosion or to rehabilitate the people.

Stronger protection needed

Mohammad Shahjahan, climate expert and director of YPSA, said, ‘Due to the impact of monsoon winds and climate change, cyclones, tidal surges, salinity, and coastal erosion are increasing in this region. This is displacing a large number of people every year, especially due to the lack of proper preparation to deal with natural disasters like cyclones.’

He said, ‘A concerted effort is needed now to address the coastal crisis and prevent displacement, such as strengthening early warning systems, building sustainable infrastructure, and ensuring safe shelter and livelihood security for vulnerable populations.’

‘The ‘National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management 2021’, adopted by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MODMR) of Bangladesh, is a comprehensive and rights-based framework for addressing displacement caused by climate-related disasters. According to the strategy, it is necessary to reduce disaster risk, strengthen early warning systems and sustainable infrastructure, ensure rapid relief for protection, safe shelter, and special assistance to vulnerable people, including women and children, and ensure safe rehabilitation, livelihood reconstruction, and inclusion in social protection systems for durable solutions,’ he added.

‘This river has taken all our property. We don't want to lose it anymore. We want protection for a normal life,’ Selim Molla said, raising his index finger as he walked along the banks of the Meghna River.

Rafiqul Islam Montu is an award-winning independent journalist focusing on environmental issues, climate change, and coastal communities.

The disagreements over presidential power and state religion

Two constitution reform commission members on their differences

VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

In Bangladesh, a ceremonial President once built a road through a wetland, ignoring objections from state institutions. It may become even more difficult for such institutions to disregard the wishes of an elected President. As a result, an elected and empowered presidency could contribute to the weakening of state institutions.

SHARIF BHUIYAN AND FIROZ AHMED

As members of the Constitution Reform Commission, we, Sharif Bhuiyan and Firoz Ahmed, submitted two written notes to the Commission—one dated November 23, 2024, on strengthening the office of the President, and another dated December 31, 2024, on the inclusion of “Bismillah” and a state religion in the Constitution. In those notes, we set out our shared views, which differed from those of the majority of the other Commission members.

The note on the office of the President was submitted at a time when the majority of the Commission favoured strengthening that office in two ways: first, by providing for the direct election of the President; and second, by conferring specific powers on the office. We differed from that view. Our views led to further discussions on the matter and were eventually adopted by the Commission.

Although our views on religion were not accepted, they contributed to the subsequent discussions and helped bring about certain changes in the Commission’s final recommendations.

unbridled power and to create a balance of powers, two main lines of reasoning have been discussed by the Constitution Reform Commission. The first is to address the concentration of power through several legal and institutional measures. The second is, in addition to these measures, to establish a system of power-sharing by strengthening another office parallel to the Prime Minister’s office.

1. The proposal to reduce the unilateral power of the Prime Minister through legal and institutional measures has two components:

a. Constitutionally reducing or limiting the Prime Minister’s unilateral authority. Specifically, a large part of this can be achieved by repealing or reforming Article 70 of the Constitution. Making the Parliament bicameral would also effectively further reduce the Prime Minister’s power. In addition, the Prime Minister’s authority can be regulated by setting term limits, making it mandatory that one person cannot simultaneously hold the positions of party leader and Prime Minister, and through several other such measures.

b. By strengthening state and

the possibility of the presidency evolving into a new centre of power cannot be ruled out.

b. Due to the President’s intervention, the regular functioning of a Prime Minister elected by Parliament may be obstructed, disrupted, or delayed. A solution to this may be possible, but it would require the creation of various legal mechanisms and good intentions, both of which are largely dependent on individuals.

c. The tendency of fragmentation of political parties and public distrust may both increase due to the President’s non-cooperation and adverse role. This is related to the enhanced significance of the presidency resulting from its direct election, as described in paragraph 2(a) above. Various state forces, as well as some members of the public, may consider direct election to legitimise the President’s expanded authority.

In such a situation, the Prime Minister would not only have to face opposition within Parliament but also contend with the President and the forces aligned behind him. This could become a source of political instability.

d. A real concern is that in

provides time, connections, and opportunities to exert influence, which is why there is concern.

In Bangladesh, a ceremonial President once built a road through a wetland, ignoring objections from state institutions. It may become even more difficult for such institutions to disregard the wishes of an elected President. As a result, an elected and empowered presidency could contribute

uphold equality, the Prophet refrained from asserting his special status despite the objections of his companions, since such an assertion primarily applied within his own community.

6. The example of several Western European constitutions that include a state religion has been raised in the discussion. It has been argued that this has not turned them into theocratic or undemocratic states.

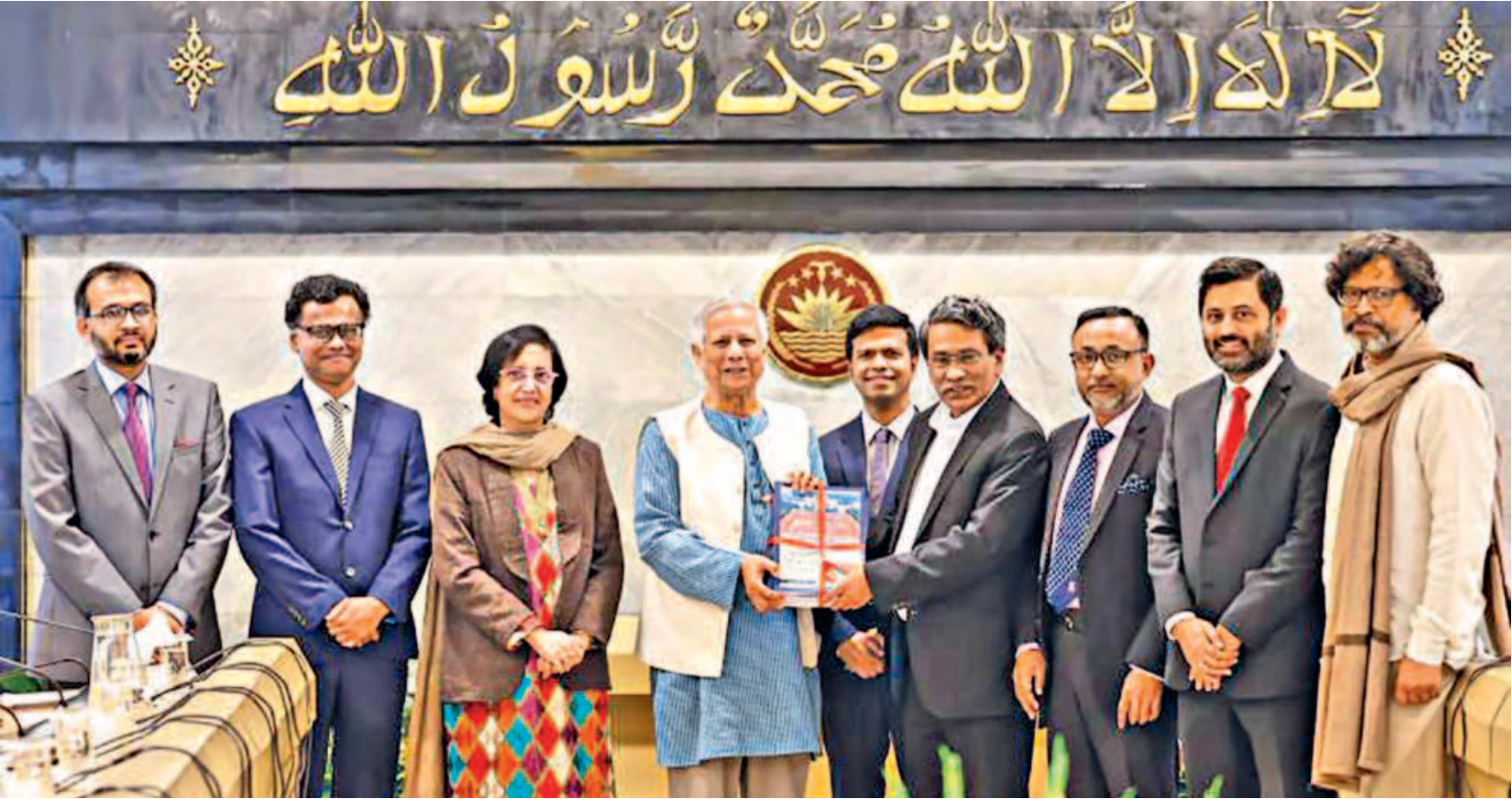


PHOTO: CA PRESS WING

▲ The Constitution Reform Commission, led by Professor Ali Riaz, officially submitted its final report to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus on January 15, 2025.

Further, based on those discussions, the Commission’s report states that the Commission’s members were unable to reach a unanimous decision on this matter.

Since the notes may be of interest to the general public as well as to researchers in political science and constitutional matters, we are presenting English translations of both notes below.

1
November 23, 2024

THE RISKS OF CREATING A PARALLEL POWER CENTRE TO LIMIT THE PRIME MINISTER’S UNLIMITED AUTHORITY

There is no doubt that the concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister has given rise to constitutional authoritarianism in Bangladesh. By disempowering state institutions, gradually eroding the culture of accountability, and strengthening the bureaucracy, the office of the head of the executive branch has continually accumulated power decade after decade. Ultimately, this has played a central role in creating the structural conditions that led to elections without voting rights and the emergence of fascism.

To end the Prime Minister’s

constitutional institutions and freeing them from the Prime Minister’s control, it is possible to bring the Prime Minister under accountability, ensure the unfettered exercise of the people’s voting rights, and create an environment where corruption becomes more difficult. In that case, the executive branch would no longer have exclusive authority over appointments, transfers, and decision-making within these institutions.

2. On the other hand, the second proposal does not discard the first proposal. Rather, alongside it, to balance the Prime Minister’s power, the introduction of an elected President—who would carry out certain specified constitutional responsibilities, help counterbalance the Prime Minister’s unilateral authority, and prevent the concentration of power—has been proposed.

In our view, the introduction of an elected President may create the possibility of the following crises and complications in the future:

a. If the President is directly elected, that position would be the only office in the state elected by direct popular vote. This could create a sphere of power parallel to the Prime Minister’s. Even if the President is not directly elected by the people but is instead elected through an electoral college at any level outside Parliament,

many countries, military intervention in politics occurs, centred on the ceremonial office of the President. If the presidency derives its legitimacy from a popular vote, this tendency may increase further for obvious reasons. The Prime Minister is responsible for many unpopular day-to-day actions, whereas the President is free from such responsibilities.

As a result, the presence of a parallel office often prevents the Prime Minister from navigating difficult periods and instead subjects the Prime Minister to multifaceted pressures beyond politics. At the same time, the culture of overcoming political pressure and resolving national crises through compromise among political parties may be delayed or weakened by the President’s increased constitutional power.

Besides, the office of the President may emerge as a point of mediation, with both positive and negative consequences.

e. The office of an elected President may also emerge as a major obstacle to the independent development of state institutions, as well as a new source of corruption, nepotism, lobbying, and pressure. A President who is not required to participate in policymaking or to remain regularly accountable to Parliament bears comparatively less responsibility and risk. Additionally, such a position

to the weakening of state institutions.

In this way, if a parallel presidential office is empowered, the possibility of weakening the elected office of the Prime Minister in Parliament and thereby creating space for undemocratic governance cannot be ruled out. All the risks described above are potentially high.

However, it is also important for the state to restrain the Prime Minister’s power. A more effective solution may be to legally limit the Prime Minister’s authority, ensure his accountability to Parliament, and promote the development of state institutions and agencies. If this path is adopted, it can also be expected that accountability across the three branches of the state, as well as a culture of political compromise among parties, will gradually strengthen.

2
December 31, 2024

ON THE MENTION OF “BISMILLAH” AND THE STATE RELIGION IN THE CONSTITUTION

On this issue, opinions have varied. We are setting them out in writing to avoid repetition, with the hope that this will facilitate discussion.

1. Granting special status to the religion of the majority will create a sense of inequality and indignity among those in the minority. This is contrary to the promise of our Constitution to ensure equality and human dignity for all.

2. The religion of the majority is already well established in society. Mentioning it separately will carry significance regarding the state’s orientation and convey a particular message.

3. A large section of religious scholars has argued that keeping the state and religion separate helps preserve the dignity of religion and serves as a safeguard against its exploitative use.

4. Religion belongs to the respective communities, while the state belongs to all. The state should accordingly be viewed as a collective institution. The Constitution is the supreme law of the state and an expression of the collective aspirations of the people. However, state religion has no real legal significance and is not a collective aspiration, not even of the majority.

5. The Medina Charter may be cited as an example, where no supremacy of any particular community was declared. Rather, it emphasised the collective dignity of all. Similarly, in the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, in order to

However, in reality, they were initially states defined by religious identity, where people of different religions or sects had to live under oppression and discrimination. Over time, through various reforms, these conditions were abolished, and those constitutional and legal provisions became inoperative. It may be noted that these states were shaped by centuries of bloody religious wars—particularly conflicts among religious sects—which account for this specific reality. Bangladesh has had little experience of such religious wars. Rather, the history of this region has generally been one of tolerance and equal respect.

7. It has been argued that Islam has shaped the distinct identity of our geographical region. While there is truth to this, it presents only a partial picture. From the medieval period, Islam has played a significant role in the development of agricultural and popular society in this region, but other religions have contributed in similar ways as well. Even during the Mughal era, when this influence was particularly prominent, other religious communities were equally involved and played important roles in the development of culture and civilisation.

8. The proposal of a state religion would send a wrong message in terms of international relations as well.

9. It has also been argued that without the mention of a state religion, there would be no practical difference between Bangladesh and neighbouring India; it would be the same as if it were a province. In response to this view, our position is that, as stated in paragraph 7 above, while Islam has played a distinctive role in shaping the cultural identity of the people of this land, other religions have also contributed in similar ways. Collectively, these influences have created a shared cultural identity that distinguishes it from the rest of the world and makes it unique among states.

10. If we aim to move toward nation-building and the formation of a collective national identity, then we must focus on building a strong state by ensuring equal dignity for all religions and cultures and by guaranteeing their own rights to develop.

Dr Sharif Bhuiyan is a senior advocate at the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. He served as a member of the Constitution Reform Commission.

Firoz Ahmed is member of the political council of Ganosamhati Andolon. He served as a member of the Constitutional Reform Commission.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

Oil flowers on the coastlines

Sunflower fields in coastal districts meet farmers’ edible oil needs, with scope to boost national supply beyond tourism appeal

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, SUKANTA HALDER and KN DEYA

For some tourists visiting Kuakata, acres of sunflower fields are simply a scenic backdrop for photos. But for farmers in Patuakhali and neighbouring Barguna, the crop has become an increasingly important part of their livelihoods.

Despite certain limitations, sunflowers’ tolerance to soil salinity makes them well-suited to coastal areas, where fields often remain unused after the Aman paddy is harvested in November and December.

Farmers say they are not driven by export ambitions or the national goal of replacing imports; instead, sunflowers serve as a practical crop that meets household cooking oil needs while offering some additional income.

Bangladesh still produces only a small portion of its oilseed demand and relies heavily on imports. To address this, the government has taken steps to expand oilseed cultivation, leading to steady growth in the sector.

While mustard and soybean production have increased more significantly, sunflower farming has also expanded.

However, challenges such as limited seed availability, lack of diverse varieties, and high seed costs continue to restrict wider adoption.

FARMERS SEE STEADY RETURNS

Bimal Kabiraj, a farmer from Monoharpur village in Patuakhali, has been growing sunflowers and mustard for a decade. He says interest in the crop has been rising among both farmers and consumers.

Last year, he cultivated sunflowers on 25 bighas of land, harvesting about eight maunds of seeds per bigha. He sold part of the produce at Tk 3,000 per maund (one maund—around 40 kilogrammes) and reduced his cultivation to 15 bighas this year.

After meeting his family’s annual cooking oil needs, Kabiraj sells the surplus, often to buyers from Dhaka and Khulna who collect oil directly from his home.

“It’s an additional crop that needs low cost and labour but gives high returns,” said fellow farmer Dinesh Chandra.

Kabiraj added that sunflower fields in full bloom often attract tourists travelling to Kuakata. “We enjoy their attention,” he said, “but we ask them not to damage the crop.”

PROCESSING FACILITIES BOOST INTEREST

A major turning point for farmers in Barguna came with the installation of a modern oil processing and refining machine in Talatoli upazila through a public–private partnership.

Set up at farmer Martin Mridha’s residence in Zakirtabak village last April, the machine cost Tk 28 lakh,



with Tk 10 lakh provided as a subsidy by the Department of Agricultural Marketing (DAM). It can crush 200 kilogrammes (kg) of seeds per hour and refine up to 500 litres of oil daily.

Md Bashir Uddin, a sub-assistant agriculture officer and Mridha’s son, said farmers previously struggled due to a lack of local processing facilities.

“Now they can produce and market oil themselves, increasing their income,” he said.

Following the installation, sunflower cultivation in the village expanded by at least 140 bighas this year.

Last year, Mridha purchased 300 maunds of seeds and produced oil, which was sold at Tk 250 per litre without refining. Plans are underway to begin refined oil production with technical support from China and market it through major companies.

Mridha noted that many farmers value sunflower oil for its health benefits and primarily use it for household consumption. The oil is typically extracted from seeds left after setting aside stock for the next planting season.

Alkam Hossain, a DAM marketing facilitator, said processing costs are about Tk 15 per kg of seeds, making it affordable. He added that higher domestic production could reduce reliance on imports and save foreign currency.

PROFITS AND BY-PRODUCTS

Mridha himself has been growing sunflowers on eight bighas for five years. Last year, he spent Tk 36,000 and harvested 60 maunds of seeds, producing about 780 litres of oil.

He sold the oil at Tk 230 per litre,



earning roughly Tk 180,000 and making a profit of around Tk 144,000. By-products such as oilcake are sold as cattle feed at Tk 30 to Tk 40 per kg.

He said the crop requires little irrigation and also improves soil fertility.

Farmers had previously reduced sunflower cultivation due to limited processing facilities and low prices. However, improved machinery has revived interest, encouraging more farmers to take up the crop.

EXPANSION AND FLUCTUATIONS

According to agriculture officials, sunflower cultivation in Talatoli has fluctuated sharply – from 2,000 hectares in 2022–23 to just 99 hectares in 2024–25 – before rebounding to 1,050 hectares in the current fiscal year.

In Patuakhali, cultivation has increased dramatically, rising nearly 64 times over five years – from 55 hectares in 2021–22 to more than 35,000 hectares this year, with a production target of about 63,000 tonnes of oilseeds.

As per the BBS Yearbook of Agricultural Statistics 2024, between FY22 and FY24, Barishal division remains in the lead in terms of both acreage and production of sunflower, followed by Chattogram, Sylhet and Khulna.

It may be noted that the total national acreage of sunflower in FY24 was 6908.31 acres, while total national production was 3895.16 tonnes.

but remains concentrated in coastal districts such as Patuakhali, Barishal, Bhola, Pirojpur, Barguna, Satkhira, Bagerhat, and parts of Noakhali.

He noted that 90 to 95 percent of production comes from these areas.

He said the crop is well-suited to saline-prone regions where land often remains unused, offering better yields and higher oil content than traditional oilseeds like mustard.

The project has introduced 12 cropping patterns, allowing farmers to grow two to three crops annually – for example, inserting mustard between Boro and Aman cycles – helping utilise previously idle land.

However, Alam acknowledged that sunflower production declined in FY25 due to unfavourable weather during the seeding stage, along with issues related to seed quality and availability. High prices of imported hybrid seeds also discourage wider adoption.

He added that although private sector interest is increasing, large-scale investment remains limited due to the inconsistent supply of sunflower seeds throughout the year.

RESEARCH, CHALLENGES, FUTURE PROSPECTS

The Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) continues to support the sector through research, seed multiplication, and farmer training.

Sunflower research in Bangladesh began in 1974, with varieties released in 2004, 2006, and 2018. After a period of slow progress, research has regained momentum, leading to the development of new promising lines.

“In terms of quality, sunflower oil is one of the best edible oils in the world,” said Rabiul Islam, senior scientific officer at the Oilseed Research Centre (ORC) in Gazipur under BARI.

He said scientists are working to integrate sunflowers into the country’s rice-based cropping system. However, current varieties take more than 100 days to mature – longer than crops like wheat, mustard, and potatoes – limiting where they can be grown.

Research is now focused on developing faster-maturing, shorter, and more resilient plants, as existing tall varieties are vulnerable to damage.

Shekh Hasna Habib, another senior scientific officer at ORC, said sunflower farming has strong potential but requires a complete value chain.

“While crops like mustard are widely grown, processed and consumed, sunflowers lack an established marketing system. This leaves farmers uncertain about where to sell their produce,” she said.

She added that increasing awareness and profitability are attracting both traditional farmers and new investors. Climate change is also playing a role, as shorter winters are reducing the production window for mustard.

“A key advantage of sunflowers is their tolerance to salinity. This allows it to grow in saline areas where other Rabi crops cannot be cultivated after Aman rice,” she said.

With continued government support, improved seed supply, and stronger market linkages, experts believe sunflowers could play a larger role in reducing Bangladesh’s dependence on imported edible oil while supporting coastal livelihoods.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN



Mohammad Zahangir Alam, director of the Oil Crop Production Enhancement Project at DAE, said sunflower cultivation is spreading but remains concentrated in coastal districts. Around 90 to 95 percent of production comes from these areas.