

"They are confronting an aggressive force armed and supported by the entire Nato bloc... I firmly believe that our cause is just."
VLADIMIR PUTIN
On Ukraine war



Imports from US double in Jan-Apr

Growth in export to America remains marginal

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Imports from the US have more than doubled in the first four months of the year, as Bangladesh scrambles to shrink the bilateral trade deficit. Bangladesh imported goods worth Tk 19,104 crore from the US during January-April, up 101 percent from Tk 9,535 crore a year earlier, according to National Board of Revenue (NBR) data.

Exports to the US in the same period grew by just 3.32 percent to Tk 35,462 crore.

State-owned oil, gas, and minerals corporation Petrobangla, the Directorate General of Food (DG Food), and national flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines accounted for 38 percent of the sum.

The surge in imports reflects commitments made by the interim government to narrow the trade gap during negotiations for the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade with the Office of the United States Trade Representative, market insiders say.

Market insiders said the surge in imports reflects commitments made by the interim government to narrow the trade gap during negotiations for the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART) with the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR).

Talks on the deal began mid-2025, and the ART was signed on February 9, only three days before the national election.

"Concerns over an agreement signed shortly before the national election are quite natural," said Muinul Islam, former economics professor at the Chittagong University.

However, doubt shrouds the future of the deal as the US Supreme Court scrapped President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs on February 20.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



An eight-month-old baby cries on his father's shoulder while receiving treatment for measles at the DNCC Covid Dedicated Hospital in the capital's Mohakhali. He has been admitted there for six days. Nine more children died of measles and measles-like symptoms yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Govt to probe measles deaths

9 more children die; death toll now 352

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has launched an investigation to determine whether negligence was a factor in the measles deaths and, if so, who is responsible, said Health Secretary Quamruzzaman Chowdhury yesterday.

"Everything that is usually done in an investigation will be done — you will be able to see it," he said while replying to reporters' queries at a roundtable styled 'Measles Outbreak: What Should Be Done to Get Rid Of'.

Asked about details on the investigation, he said he cannot say much as the probe is ongoing.

"Have confidence in us. We are not

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

World Cup for the super rich

Final match ticket Tk 28cr

ATIQUÉ ANAM

When the FIFA World Cup was held in Qatar four years ago, Mymensingh native Partha Sarathee Ghosh

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BNP grassroots to quiz ministers

Tarique rolls out 'party parliament', asks leaders to ready for upazila polls

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP has taken an initiative to make ministers accountable not only in parliament but also before the party's grassroots leaders, party sources said.

The move came at a day-long views-exchange meeting at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh auditorium in the capital's Khamarbari area yesterday, where BNP Chairman and Prime

SEE PAGE 5 COL 3

Woman, three daughters among five murdered

Husband, prime accused, on the run

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

The bodies of five members of a family, including three children, were found with their throats slit at their house in Gazipur's Kapasia upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased were identified as Sharmin, 35; her three daughters — Mim, 16, Maria, 8, and Faria, 2 — and her brother, Rasul, 22.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



Taking advantage of the sunshine after days of relentless rain, a farmer winnows freshly harvested paddy in Majlispur area of Kishoreganj's Nikli upazila yesterday. The return of clear skies brought much-needed relief to farmers, who are now racing to dry and clean their crops before the next downpour. PHOTO: TAFSILUL AZIZ

2 killed in BSF firing along B'baria border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Two Bangladeshi men, including a college student, were killed after members of India's Border Security Force (BSF) opened fire along the border in Kasba upazila of Brahmanbaria late Friday night.

The incident marks the second fatal border shooting by the BSF in the last 30 days.

The victims were identified as Md Morsalin, 20, of Dhajanagar village, and Nobir Hossain, 40, of Madhupur village. Morsalin was a second-year student at Gopinathpur Alhaj Shah Alam Degree College and was preparing for his upcoming HSC exams, said family members.

The shooting incident took place inside Indian territory near the Dhajanagar-Pathariyadwar border, according to a BGB press release signed by BGB 60 Battalion Commander Lt Col SM Shariful Islam.

A group of about 15 Bangladeshis trespassed nearly 200 yards into the Indian territory around 11:00pm on Friday for "smuggling purposes".

As they were returning to Bangladesh, a patrol team from the BSF 49

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Suvendu sworn in as chief minister of West Bengal

THE STATESMAN

BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari yesterday took his oath as the chief minister of West Bengal, becoming the state's first BJP chief minister since independence and marking a historic political shift in Bengal after decades of regional party dominance.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the grand swearing-in ceremony held at Kolkata's Brigade Parade Ground amid massive security arrangements and the presence of senior BJP leaders, party workers and supporters from across the state.

Ahead of the ceremony, Adhikari described the moment as the beginning of a new chapter for West Bengal.

In a post on social media, he said, "Today marks the end of decades of misrule and the beginning of a 'Double Engine' era of development, peace, and prosperity. The era of 'Sonar Bangla' officially begins. Welcome, Pradhan Mantri Ji."

The announcement of Adhikari as the BJP Legislature Party leader was made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who served as the party's Central Observer for the leadership election. Shah chaired a meeting of newly elected BJP legislators in Kolkata a day before the ceremony.

Adhikari emerged as one of the BJP's central faces in the Assembly elections and delivered a major political blow to the Trinamool Congress by defeating outgoing Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee from the Bhabanipur constituency by more than 15,000 votes. He had contested from both Nandigram and Bhabanipur during the polls.

The BJP secured a sweeping victory in the 2026 West Bengal Assembly elections, winning 207 seats in the 294-member Assembly.

PHOTO ON PAGE 5

১৬১১১
বাংলাদেশ কোস্ট গার্ড

“নৌ নিরাপত্তা সপ্তাহ - ২০২৬ সফল হোক”

প্রতিপাদ্য বিষয়: বিপদমুক্ত নৌযাত্রা, জানমালের সুরক্ষা

নিরাপদ নৌ চালনার জন্য কতিপয় নির্দেশনা নিম্নরূপ

মাটিকদের প্রতি নির্দেশনা	মাটিকারদের প্রতি নির্দেশনা
১। নির্ধারিত সংখ্যক ও নির্ধারিত গ্রেডের মাটিকার ও ড্রাইভার দ্বারা নৌযান পরিচালনা করুন।	৬। নির্দিষ্ট সংখ্যক বয়া নৌযানের আছে কিনা নিশ্চিত করুন।
২। প্রতিটি নৌযানে মোবাইল ফোন ও রেডিও সরবরাহ নিশ্চিত করুন।	৭। প্রয়োজনের সময় যাত্রীরা যাতে সহজে বয়া ব্যবহার করতে পারে সেভাবে রাখুন।
৩। দুর্ঘটনাপূর্ণ আবহাওয়া বিরাজ করলে নৌযানের যাত্রা স্থগিত রাখার জন্য মাটিকারকে নির্দেশনা দিন।	৮। যাত্রার পূর্বে ইঞ্জিন ভালভাবে কাজ করছে কিনা, পরীক্ষা করুন।
৪। যাত্রীবাহী নৌযানের দু'পাশের ভারী পর্দা ও রশি অপসারণ করুন।	৯। নেভিগেশনাল বাতিসমূহ সচল আছে কিনা, যাত্রার পূর্বে নিশ্চিত হোন।
৫। নৌযানের মাটিকার ত্রিভুজের যাত্রী সাধারণের অবাধ চলাচল বন্ধ করার জন্য দু'পাশ অস্থায়ীভাবে বন্ধ করার ব্যবস্থা করুন।	১০। পথিমধ্যে ঝড়ের আশংকা দেখা দিলে নৌযানকে নিরাপদ স্থানে সরিয়ে নিন বা কিনারায় ভিড়িয়ে রাখুন।
মাটিকারদের প্রতি নির্দেশনা	১১। নৌযানে মোবাইল ফোন ও রেডিও রাখুন এবং নিয়মিত আবহাওয়ার বুলেটিন শুনুন।
১। আবহাওয়ার পূর্বাভাস জেনে নৌযান নিয়ে বন্দর ত্যাগ করবেন না।	১২। আবহাওয়া অবনতি হওয়ার আশংকা থাকলে নৌযান ছাড়ার পূর্বে পরবর্তী বন্দরের পোর্ট অফিসারের সাথে মোবাইলে যোগাযোগ করে নৌযান ছাড়ার বিষয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত নেন।
২। সার্ভে সনদে উল্লেখিত যাত্রী সংখ্যার অতিরিক্ত যাত্রী বহন করবেন না।	১৩। টৈব কাপড়ের বিহীন নৌযান পরিচালনা করবেন না।
৩। ডেকের উপর যাত্রীদের বসার স্থানে ব্যবসায়িক মালামাল পরিবহন করবেন না।	১৪। নির্দিষ্ট সংখ্যক এবং নির্ধারিত গ্রেডের মাটিকার-ড্রাইভার নৌযানে না থাকলে নৌযান পরিচালনা করবেন না।
৪। ধারণ ক্ষমতার অতিরিক্ত মালামাল বহন করবেন না।	১৫। ঝড়ের সময় যাত্রীবাহী নৌযানের দু'পাশের ভারী পর্দা উঠিয়ে শক্ত করে বেঁধে রাখুন যাতে অবাধে বাতাস প্রবাহিত হতে পারে।
৫। হ্যাচার মধ্যে মালামাল রেখে হ্যাচ কভার নাট-বন্ধু দিয়ে পানিরোধক ভাবে বন্ধ করার ব্যবস্থা করবেন।	১৬। যাত্রীরা যাতে নৌযানের ছাদে উঠতে না পারে সে ব্যাপারে সতর্ক দৃষ্টি রাখবেন।

প্রচারে: বাংলাদেশ কোস্ট গার্ড

বিশিষ্ট শিল্পপতি ও সমাজ সেবক, লীরা গ্রুপ অব ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ -এর চেয়ারম্যান

নওজাত সারওয়াজ ইসলাম

লায়ন্স ইন্টারন্যাশনাল, জেলা ৩১৫৫১, বাংলাদেশ
২০২৬-২০২৭ -এর জেলা গভর্নর হিসেবে নির্বাচিত হওয়ায়

শ্রদ্ধেচ্ছা ও অভিনন্দন

আপনার সুস্বাস্থ্য, দীর্ঘায়ু ও মানব কল্যাণে আপনার অবদান অব্যাহত থাকুক -
এই প্রত্যশা ও দোয়া আমাদের সবার পক্ষ থেকে।

লীরা গ্রুপ অব ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ -এর সকল কর্মকর্তা ও কর্মচারীবৃন্দ

LIRA
WITH PLASTIC SINCE 1965
আমরাই প্রথম, আমরাই সেরা



PHOTOS: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Politicians, academics, civil society members and others joined The Daily Star in celebrating its 35th anniversary in Khulna yesterday. They included Khulna-4 BNP MP Azizul Bari Helal and Khulna-2 Jamaat MP Sheikh Zahangir Hossain. Celebrations were held in Dhaka on April 24-25 and in Chattogram on May 2. Held at Khulna Press Club, the event featured a documentary and photo exhibition on the December 18, 2025 mob attack on the paper's Dhaka office. Similar programmes will next be held in Barishal, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Rangpur and Mymensingh.

UPDF member shot dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A member of Prosit Khisa led United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) was yesterday shot dead in Sajek union of Baghaichhari upazila in Rangamati.

The incident occurred in the Shuknochori area of Sajek, located on the Marishya Dighinala road. The deceased was identified as Hegera Chakma, 49.

"UPDF member Hegera Chakma alias Tarun and two others spent the night at a house in Shuknochori village. When he was leaving for organisational work at around 5:45am today, terrorists of the UPDF (Democratic), who had been lying in wait, opened fire on him. He died on the spot," said UPDF spokesperson Angya Marma in a statement.

Marma blamed the UPDF Democratic Party for the murder.

However, several leaders of the UPDF Democratic Party were contacted regarding the allegations, but no response was received.

Police recovered the body from the scene; the body was sent to Khagrachhari Sadar Hospital for autopsy, Tofazzal Hossain, the officer-in-charge of Sajek Police Station, told The Daily Star.

"No one has filed any complaint with us yet," he said.

Leaders and activists of UPDF and allied organisations staged protest and blocked the road for an hour at Ujobazar demanding a trial of the killers.

They also announced a half-day blockade on the main road of Sajek Tourism on Monday protesting the murder.

Imports from US double in Jan-Apr

FROM PAGE 1

Malaysia, which had also signed an ART with the US, declared the deal "null and void" on March 16.

Following the ruling, Trump imposed a 10 percent tariff under the Trade Act of 1974, and raised it to 15 percent the next day.

But on May 7, a specialised federal court in New York ruled the law could only be applied if the US faced "large and serious" balance of payments deficits, which it said was not the case.

Under the ART, Bangladesh agreed to remove customs, supplementary, and regulatory duties on about 4,500 US products, one of its largest tariff reduction measures in recent years. Duties on another 2,210 items will be phased out gradually.

In return, the US withdrew retaliatory tariffs on 1,638 Bangladeshi products, including fibres, iron, steel, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and apparel made from US cotton. However, most-favoured-nation (MFN) duties averaging 16-17 percent remain.

The USTR also reduced the reciprocal tariff on

Bangladeshi exports further by one percentage point to 19 percent. Initially, in April last year, the US had announced a 37 percent tariff on imports from Bangladesh, citing trade gap.

Legal formalities for ART implementation are still pending, yet the government has begun commercial commitments outlined in the deal.

Last month, Biman signed a \$3.7 billion agreement with Boeing to purchase 14 aircraft.

From what has been disclosed so far, Bangladesh's gains appear limited, while the US stands to benefit much more, Prof Muinul said.

Besides tariff cuts, the agreement included minimum annual import commitments for agricultural goods, fuel, and industrial raw materials.

"As a result, Bangladesh may have to import certain products even when domestic demand is low or prices are higher, suggesting that Bangladesh's interests received less priority in the agreement," he added.

NBR data show 83 percent of Bangladesh's US import expenditure during January-April

was concentrated in 10 products worth Tk 15,884 crore: liquefied natural gas (LNG), liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), soybean, wheat, cotton, iron and steel scrap, soybean oilcake and meal, aircraft engines, brewing waste, and liquefied propane.

LNG topped the list at Tk 4,913 crore, purchased by Petrobangla. LPG followed at Tk 3,105 crore, led by Omera Petroleum (Tk 684 crore), Sun Gas (Tk 507 crore) and United Aygaz LPG (Tk 442 crore).

Bangladesh had not imported any LNG or LPG from the US a year earlier.

Bangladesh also imported American wheat worth Tk 1,797 crore in the four-month period after no purchase of the grain from the US a year earlier. The DG Food accounted for Tk 1,670 crore of the wheat import.

Imports of US cotton, vital for the garment sector, increased by 44.6 percent year-on-year to Tk 1,080 crore.

Aircraft engine imports also saw one of the sharpest jumps, from Tk 137 crore to Tk 1,852 crore.

However, some major products saw declines.

Soybean oil imports from the US fell to Tk 3,240 crore

from Tk 3,329 crore, while iron and steel scrap imports dropped to Tk 704 crore from Tk 1,462 crore.

Sonargaon Seeds Crushing Mills imported soybean and soybean seeds worth Tk 1,036 crore. Delta Agrofood Industries' imports stood at Tk 867 crore and Jamuna Spacetech Joint Venture Tk 811 crore.

MMasrur Reaz, chairman and CEO of a private think tank Policy Exchange, said, "The US had used higher tariffs as leverage to push countries into trade agreements aimed at increasing American exports."

"As the US is Bangladesh's largest export destination, Dhaka had to assure Washington that those commitments would be implemented, leading to higher imports by both government and private sector entities."

He noted that most imported products were essential commodities, including fuel, wheat, soybean, and aircraft parts.

"We previously sourced many of these items from other countries but are now importing them from the US. So, there is undoubtedly an impact of the agreement," he added.

Volcanic eruption kills three hikers in Indonesia

AFP, North Halmahera

Three hikers — two Singaporeans and a local — died in an eruption Friday of Indonesia's Mount Dukono volcano where they found themselves in a no-go zone, officials said.

The eruption on Halmahera island sent an ash cloud about 10 kilometres (6.2 miles) into the air, with no towns or villages near enough to face any immediate threat.

Twenty hikers were on the slopes when disaster struck, North Halmahera police chief Erlichson Pasarihu told reporters at a volcano monitoring station in Mamuya village.

He said nine were from Singapore and the rest Indonesian.

As of Friday evening, 17 climbers — seven of them foreigners — have been found alive, according to the head of local rescue agency Iwan Ramdani.

Rescue efforts have been paused and will resume Saturday, he said.

Tour guide Alex Djangu, who was on the slopes when the eruption happened, said he arrived with a tour group on Thursday and found the volcano acting "a bit strange".

2 killed in BSF firing

FROM PAGE 1

Battalion intercepted the group. A scuffle reportedly broke out before BSF personnel fired two rounds of shotgun pellets, the press release said.

The injured were taken to the Bishalgarh hospital in Tripura, India, where they died while undergoing treatment, the BGF said, citing BSF authorities.

Their bodies were handed over to the BGF following a battalion-level flag meeting at the Khimal border area of Kasba in the afternoon.

Lt Col SM Shariful Islam, confirmed the matter, saying the BGF lodged a protest with the BSF over the incident. At Morsalin's home in Dhajnar, his father Hebu Miya said local youths had called his son out on Friday night.

"I demand a proper investigation and justice for my son's killing. He was a college student and was

supposed to sit for his HSC exams this year."

Speaking through tears, Morsalin's mother pleaded for the return of his body.

In Madhupur village, Nobir Hossain's son Tapan said, "My father had been away from home since Friday evening. Later we learnt that he had been killed in BSF firing."

According to rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra, at least 34 Bangladeshis were killed by the BSF in 2025, including 24 in shootings and 10 allegedly due to physical torture. At least 38 others were also injured.

This year, at least five Bangladeshis have been killed by the BSF till yesterday, including three in shootings and two allegedly due to physical torture, while four others were injured.

On April 8, Ali Hossain, 49, was killed in BSF firing along the Dhabalguri border in Patgram, Lalmonirhat.

A day earlier, the BSF had

expressed regret over the shooting and injuring of another Bangladeshi youth, Mizan, in the same border area.

On April 28, Zahed Ur Rahman, the prime minister's information and broadcasting adviser, said border killings have fallen by 75 percent and that the government wants to bring it down to zero, which is possible through diplomatic efforts with neighbouring countries.

On March 1, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said Bangladesh did not want any killings along the border and that India had also expressed sincerity on the issue after the outgoing Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma met him at his office.

Border killings were also among the key issues discussed during Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman's visit to New Delhi last month.

Iran casts doubt on US peace efforts

FROM PAGE 12

To suspicions about the motivation and seriousness of the American side in the path of diplomacy," he said, according to an Iranian account of the call published by the ISNA news agency.

In an incident on Friday, a US fighter jet fired on and disabled two Iranian-flagged tankers that Washington accused of challenging its naval blockade of Iran's ports.

An Iranian military official told local media

the country's navy had responded "to American terrorism with strikes" and that "the clashes have now ceased".

The latest incident came after a previous flare-up overnight Thursday to Friday in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital international sea lane that Iran is seeking to control to extract tolls from foreign vessels and wield economic

leverage over the US and its allies.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio reiterated on Friday that it was "unacceptable" for Tehran to control the key oil route.

Washington has sent Iran, via Pakistani mediators, a proposal to extend the truce in the Gulf to allow for talks on a final settlement of the conflict launched 10 weeks ago with US Israeli strikes on Iran.

World Cup for the super rich

FROM PAGE 1

fulfilled a lifelong dream by attending four matches live at the venue. He watched Brazil face Switzerland, Spain take on Japan, Argentina's clash against Australia, and Spain's knockout meeting with Morocco.

For the then 42-year-old banker, it was an unforgettable experience. He had bought the four tickets for roughly Tk 1 lakh.

Partha had purchased the tickets through FIFA's online portal and spent 12 days in Doha, staying at a friend's home and relying mostly on public transport, which came free with the Hayya Card — a World Cup document that doubled as an entry permit and provided complimentary access to Qatar's metro and bus services. The card also offered free entry into the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Oman.

Although Partha did not make use of those additional travel opportunities, the World Cup itself proved deeply fulfilling.

"It was a smooth experience, and a gratifying one for me because it was my first time watching World Cup matches live at the venue," Partha fondly reminisced to The Daily Star.

Ever since, Partha, a passionate football fan and travel enthusiast, had eagerly awaited the FIFA World Cup 2026 in the United States, Canada and Mexico — the biggest and supposedly the most inclusive World Cup in history.

Yet, long before the tournament has even kicked off, it has already begun to feel anything but inclusive for ordinary supporters like him.

LIMITED TICKETS, SOARING PRICES

FIFA began selling tickets for

the 104-match tournament through phased online releases from September last year. Demand, however, has vastly outstripped supply, with an estimated 60 million requests expected for around six million tickets.

Like all member associations, the Bangladesh Football Federation received a limited allocation from FIFA — only 330 tickets in total. Bangladesh received a relatively larger share for the group stage and progressively fewer for the knockout rounds, including just 10 tickets for the final.

Ticket prices allocated through BFF ranged from approximately Tk 29,000 to Tk 11.4 lakh, depending on the ticket category. Applications were accepted during a five-day window in January and, according to federation officials, requests were submitted for 498 tickets before 330 allocations were finalised by mid-April.

Partha, however, opted not to apply through the BFF, anticipating a scenario of low supply and high demand. Instead, he once again turned to FIFA's online portal, securing a ticket as early as September last year for the group stage match between Curacao and Ivory Coast, scheduled for June 25 in Philadelphia. The reason Partha chose this match is that it is one of the lower-demand fixtures of the tournament, costing USD 150 (approx. Tk 18,000). His plan was simple: travel to the United States and try to purchase tickets for bigger matches from resellers, regardless of how expensive they became.

But those plans soon unravelled.

NO VISA GUARANTEE FOR TICKET HOLDERS

"All my excitement and anticipation turned into disappointment when I was rejected a visa for the USA. I have been to quite a few countries and I couldn't wrap my head around the fact that I was denied a visa for the World Cup, despite having secured a match ticket," the 46-year-old said.

Unlike the Hayya Card system used during Qatar 2022, tickets for the 2026 World Cup do not function as entry permits. At best, they serve only as supporting documents in visa applications.

To make matters worse, the travel restrictions introduced by the Donald Trump administration have added fresh anxiety for supporters from several participating nations. Fans from Ivory Coast, Haiti, Iran and Senegal now face severe restrictions on travelling to the United States unless they already possess valid visas.

For many supporters around the world, the dream of attending football's greatest spectacle increasingly appears dependent not only on luck in the ticket lottery, but also on wealth, nationality and access.

FIFA'S NEW BUSINESS MODEL

FIFA is projected to earn around three billion dollars from ticket sales and hospitality during the 2026 World Cup — more than triple the revenue generated from the previous tournament.

While the expanded format partly explains the increase, a major factor has been the introduction of dynamic pricing and an official resale market, both being used in a World Cup for

the first time.

Dynamic pricing, common in North American sports and entertainment, allows ticket prices to fluctuate according to demand. FIFA's official resale platform, meanwhile, permits supporters to sell tickets at prices of their choosing, with FIFA reportedly pocketing 30 percent of every transaction.

The policy has sparked widespread backlash following reports of tickets for the final match being listed on resale sites for USD 2.3 million (approx. Tk 28 crore). This represents a staggering surge from the initial USD 8,680 (Tk 10.6 lakh) price point when sales launched last December. At that time, the lowest category seats were priced at just USD 140 (Tk 17,000).

According to an analysis by The Guardian, even the cheapest seats for this World Cup are roughly six times more expensive than the average lowest-priced tickets at tournaments staged between 2006 and 2022.

Amid severe criticism, FIFA president Gianni Infantino recently defended the pricing model, saying: "We have to look at the market. We are in the market in which entertainment is the most developed in the world. So we have to apply market rates."

Those are not the words football lovers would expect from the head of a non-profit governing body that claims to reinvest its revenues into the development of world football.

And it is not just ticket prices that have spiralled. Reports suggest transport costs around host cities have also surged dramatically. In some cases, round-trip travel to stadiums is expected to

exceed 150 dollars — more than 10 times the usual rates.

In its attempt to establish the World Cup as a premium entertainment product in the American market, FIFA appears to have embraced the harshest realities of the free-market economy, pushing ordinary supporters further away from the game they love.


Yet dissenting voices continue to grow louder. Ex-Liverpool CEO Peter Moore, a man deeply familiar with football's commercial landscape, recently told Al Jazeera: "It's the world's game, but who is this World Cup for if the world can't get in?"

Even Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola lamented the changing nature of football's greatest event.

"Before I remember the World Cup — years, years ago — was like a celebration of the joy of football for the nations going there," Guardiola said recently. "Everyone travelled all around the globe to see your country play. And it was affordable. Now, it's so expensive."

There are increasing fears that the demographic makeup of crowds — particularly in the United States, where 78 of the tournament's 104 matches will be held — could become more corporate and far less socio-economically diverse.

For ordinary supporters like Partha, attending the World Cup has become an increasingly distant dream. This summer, he will watch football's grandest spectacle from the comfort of his home, hoping that one day the tournament once again becomes accessible to the ordinary fans who give the game its soul.



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The rating was conducted based on audited financial statements up to 31 December 2025 and other relevant information.

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A group of Jahangirnagar University students visits The Daily Star's ongoing photo exhibition on the arson attack and vandalism at its office on the capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday. The exhibit, displaying scarred spaces left by the assault on December 19 last year, will remain open until May 15 at The Daily Star Centre.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN



Police push for reforms, capacity building

Six proposals to be placed before PM during Police Week

Restoring trust in police top priority

Says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday said restoring public confidence in the police force and improving the law and order situation are now the government's top priorities.

In a message marking Police Week 2026, the prime minister extended greetings and congratulations to all serving, former and retired members of Bangladesh Police.

"The current government has been implementing extensive programmes aimed at building a prosperous, self-reliant, democratic and humane state based on justice," he said.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

TOUSIF KAIUM

Bangladesh Police are set to place a series of reform and capacity-building proposals before the prime minister during Police Week 2026, including the appointment of police liaison officers at Bangladesh missions abroad and the establishment of specialised police facilities in Jangal Salimpur, a crime-prone area near Chattogram city.

This year's Police Week begins today under the slogan "Amar Police, Amar Desh, Sobar Agey Bangladesh" ("My Police, My Country, Bangladesh First"), with discussions centring on institutional reform, modernisation, operational capacity, and welfare initiatives.

"A total of six proposals have already been finalised to be placed before the prime minister during the four-day event," a senior official at Police Headquarters told The Daily Star yesterday.

One of the key proposals includes appointing police liaison officers at Bangladesh missions abroad to support migrant workers and strengthen international cooperation



SIX PROPOSALS

- Police liaison officers abroad
- Specialised training facilities
- Police aviation unit
- Dedicated cybercrime unit
- Bangladesh Police Medical Service
- Dedicated sports complex

against transnational crimes.

To expand training capacity, police will propose establishing a specialised training institute in Jangal Salimpur in Chattogram, alongside two new police training centres in Sylhet and Barisal.

A high-ranking official of the Chattogram Range said the existing training programmes at the Bangladesh Police Academy were introduced long ago and no longer fully address the evolving nature of crime.

"Crime patterns have changed significantly over time. Although units such as the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit and the Bomb Disposal Unit exist, there is no dedicated training centre for them. The proposed facility in Jangal Salimpur is intended to provide specialised training for these units," the official said.

Police are also seeking to establish a specialised aviation unit to improve operational mobility, surveillance, rescue operations, and emergency response capacity in remote and high-risk areas.

Another major proposal involves setting up a dedicated cybercrime unit equipped with advanced forensic facilities and trained personnel. The force has also proposed forming a Police Medical Service to improve healthcare

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

141 Dhaka spots at risk of waterlogging

Experts call for canal connectivity, integrated drainage plan

HELEMUL ALAM

Dhaka's two city corporations have identified 141 locations vulnerable to waterlogging ahead of the upcoming monsoon and said they are taking measures to reduce the risk.

Of the spots, 108 are in Dhaka North City Corporation areas and 33 are in Dhaka South City Corporation areas.

Urban planners and experts, however, said the city's drainage crisis cannot be solved without

Planning and Development, said Dhaka's canals, drains and local drainage lines remain clogged with waste despite repeated cleanup drives.

"The city corporations continue to talk about projects and investments, but area-based assessments and long-term planning are still lacking," said Adil, also a former president of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners.

He said localised waterlogging has become common across the city, citing water accumulation



FILE PHOTO

restoring canal connectivity, improving maintenance, and implementing an integrated master plan.

Former Bangladesh Institute of Planners president Mohammad Fazle Reza Sumon said the biggest problem remains the lack of connectivity between secondary and tertiary drainage channels and the main outfalls.

"Ultimately, all water has to flow into the primary channels. But the connectivity needed for that is still not functioning properly," he said.

According to him, some restored drainage connections have again fallen under encroachment, while many northern areas of the city remain vulnerable despite partial improvement efforts.

He warned that the drainage system may struggle if rainfall exceeds 80 millimetres, while some areas could face severe flooding during heavier rainfall.

Urban expert Prof Adil Mohammed Khan, executive director of the Institute for

near Dhanmondi Lake after only a short spell of rainfall this year.

"That indicates flaws in the drainage design and water flow system," he added.

Adil also stressed the need for a coordinated drainage master plan instead of separate approaches by the two city corporations.

He emphasised public awareness and community involvement to prevent garbage dumping into drains.

Dr Mohammad Safiullah, superintendent engineer of DSCC, said the corporation has identified 33 hotspot areas and formed ward-based emergency response teams involving its engineering and waste management departments.

Safiullah said the corporation has increased the number of temporary pumps from two to eight this year to tackle waterlogging in critical areas, including New Market, Dhanmondi Hawkers Market, Bakshibazar, Chanmari intersection, Rajarbagh and Fakirapool.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Foreign policy to prioritise nat'l interest

Says PM's adviser on foreign affairs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister's Adviser on Foreign Affairs Humayun Kabir yesterday said Bangladesh would place national interest, economic diplomacy, strategic autonomy, balanced engagement and national security at the core of its foreign policy.

"Our foreign policy is based on the aspiration of putting Bangladesh first. It means prioritising Bangladesh, prioritising national interest and the country's development," he said while speaking as the keynote speaker at a policy roundtable.

The event, titled "Bangladesh First: A Foreign Policy Outlook for a New Bangladesh", was organised by the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies at a Dhaka hotel.

He said the BNP government's foreign policy would be multifaceted and flexible, engaging with all nations without depending on any specific country, while focusing on exports, investment,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

A woman and her son carefully tiptoe through a muddy section of the Sadarghat-Gabtolli Beribadh road in Dhaka's Alir Ghat area. Residents suffer as the dilapidated road becomes nearly impassable during and after rain. The photo was taken recently.

Values-based journalism key to public trust

Say speakers at KU seminar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Speakers at a seminar on media freedom and responsibility yesterday underscored the need to restore values-based journalism, uphold ethics, and balance editorial independence with financial sustainability to regain public trust.

They said the independence of both the media and the judiciary is vital for justice and accountability in a democratic state, while responsible and objective reporting is essential to ensure the flow of accurate information in society.

The seminar, titled "Media in the Contemporary Context", was organised by the Khulna University Journalists' Association at the conference room of the Central Research Laboratory of Khulna University.

Speaking as the keynote speaker, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam said value-based journalism must be restored to rebuild public trust in the media.

"We will restore journalism grounded in human values," he said. "This is one of the key ways to address the frustration people have developed toward the media. Freedom of the press is one of the fundamental requirements of institutional democracy," he added.

He said in a democratic state, the independence of

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

United Healthcare launches ethical review board



PHOTO: COURTESY

CITY DESK

United Healthcare Services Limited launched its first ever Institutional Ethical Review Board (IERB) on May 5, said a press release.

The initiative aims to strengthen research activities among physicians, clinicians, and healthcare professionals at United Medical College Hospital, the flagship hospital of United Healthcare.

The programme was inaugurated by Moinuddin Hasan Rashid, chairman and MD of United Group. Special guests included Nizamuddin Hasan Rashid, MD of United Healthcare, and Prof AQM Mohsen, chairman of United Medical College Hospital. The vote of thanks was delivered by United Healthcare CEO Md Faizur Rahman. Dr Azharul Islam Khan, director of Medical Services at United Healthcare, has been appointed as chief adviser of the committee, Prof Khandaker Abu Talha chairman, and Prof Mahbubur Rahman member-secretary.

KALAPARA IN PATUAKHALI

A bridge that leads nowhere

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

A bridge built at a cost of nearly Tk 3 crore in Latachaplī union of Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila has remained unusable for nearly a year due to the absence of approach roads, causing sufferings to locals.

According to sources at the Local Government Engineering Department, the 35-metre-long and 7.32-metre-wide bridge was built over the Khajura canal under the Disaster Risk Management Enhancement Project.

Construction began in February 2022, with an initial deadline of May 2023. However, the project saw prolonged delays, with the deadline extended several times, most recently until May 31 this year.

A recent visit found that although the bridge construction was completed around a year ago, work on around 200 metres of approach road on one end and 50 metres on the other has yet to begin.

As a result, residents of Khajura, Bahamkanda, Fashipara and Kolaipara villages have been suffering while travelling to the union parishad, highways, Kuakata bus terminal, and district and upazila headquarters, said



Md Jahangir Hossain, president of the Ashrayan Cooperative Society.

Ayesha Begum, 55, of Fashipara village, said her granddaughter, a sixth grader, has to use a bamboo footbridge every day to go to school.

"Now the water level is low, so crossing is manageable. But during monsoon, both sides become submerged, making it risky to cross the canal. Often, she cannot go to school," she said.

Local resident Swapan Hawlader said soil was excavated from a site

near their home for construction of the roads, causing waterlogging and inconvenience.

Sources at the LGED said contractor Gias Uddin of Patuakhali received the work order, but later allegedly handed it over to another party.

Monir Hossain, upazila engineer in Kalapara, said road construction began recently. "We hope it will be completed within May," he added.

Gias could not be contacted for comments.

Police push for reforms

FROM PAGE 3 facilities for police personnel. Police have further proposed constructing a dedicated sports complex.

AHM Shahadat Hossain, assistant inspector general (media) at Police Headquarters, said, "Like every year, this year's event will review the activities, achievements, failures, and various challenges faced by the police over the past year."

The first day will feature the annual parade.

On the second day, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is scheduled to address

senior police officials. The day will also feature annual sports competitions, the Police Women Welfare Association (PUNAK) annual gathering, and a conference between senior police officials and the home minister.

On the third day, police officials will hold meetings with ministers alongside the annual shield parade competition among police units. The day will also feature an administrative conference between the inspector general of police and senior officials, along with the presentation of IGP badges.

On the final day, the IGP will hold a conference with senior officials.

Meanwhile, the awarding of Bangladesh Police Medals and President Police Medals to 107 police officers and personnel has been postponed.

The medals were scheduled to be conferred today at the opening of the Police Week 2026.

Additional IGP (Crime) Rafiqul Islam told The Daily Star that the programme was postponed as the president, whose signature is required for the awards, left for the UK yesterday for medical check-up.

141 Dhaka spots

FROM PAGE 3 Alongside regular cleaners, contractors have also been engaged for drain cleaning operations, he added.

Safiullah said waterlogging around New Market and Mirpur Road worsened after an outlet through the BDR area was closed, slowing drainage in surrounding areas.

To address the problem, DSCC has proposed a Tk 250-300 crore project aimed at improving drainage connectivity in Dhanmondi, New Market and Bakshibazar areas.

"The proposal has already been submitted for budget allocation. If approved, it could provide a permanent solution," he said.

The project plans include extending drainage outlets towards the river and creating multiple discharge routes through areas such as Sadarghat and Chawkbazar.

DSCC is also working on canal restoration projects in Jirani, Kalunagar, Hazaribagh and Shyampur areas.

Meanwhile, DNCC Chief Engineer Brig Gen Syed Raquibul Hasan said the corporation currently oversees 29 canals but has prioritised five canals and the Mirpur area for immediate intervention during this monsoon.

The targeted canals include Sangbadik Canal, Baunia Canal, 22-foot Canal, Ramchandrapur Canal, Tolarbag Canal and Kalyanpur Canal.

"Our target is to bring Mirpur under zero flooding conditions as far as possible," Raquibul said.

He said DNCC aims to ensure that standing water in targeted areas drains within one to two hours after heavy rainfall.

According to the chief engineer, cleanup and excavation work are ongoing in Kalyanpur and Tolarbag areas, while workers have been deployed continuously to prevent sludge and garbage accumulation.

He acknowledged that cleaning box culverts remains difficult and dangerous, prompting DNCC to consider robotic or mechanised cleaning equipment in the future.

However, he said several areas, including Ashkona, Dakshinkhan and Uttarkhan, continue to face severe drainage problems due to encroached canals, wetlands and the absence of proper outlets.

"There is simply no path for water to pass in many of these places," he said.

Raquibul said full-scale projects are required for long-term solutions, including restoring canals according to proper designs and layouts.

"We cannot continue with temporary approaches forever. Permanent restoration of the canal network is necessary," he said.

Foreign policy to prioritise

FROM PAGE 3 energy security, trade connectivity, migrant workers, students abroad and the diaspora.

Bangladesh's past foreign policy often appeared reactive, country-specific and lacking in balance, he said.

With the global order changing fast, strategic competition intensifying, technology shaping geopolitics, and climate change redefining priorities, foreign policy must be professional, institutional, flexible, and, above all, driven by national interest, he stressed.

"A government that is fragmented, that has no security structure or any kind of architecture or system, is not respected at home or abroad and is

open to exploitation," he said.

He said national security would remain central to foreign policy, with a focus on counter-terrorism cooperation, intelligence sharing and regional security dialogue.

Regarding balancing ties with China and India, Kabir said Bangladesh would not allow itself to become "a football" between the two powers, and could instead act as a neutral friend to both to ensure "fair play" between them.

Kabir also said Bangladesh would not need to "hedge" between countries in its foreign policy approach. Citing the Rohingya crisis as a top national security priority, he said the previous government had failed

to negotiate effectively because it was "hedging between China and India policies".

BIPSS President Maj Gen (ret'd) ANM Muniruzzaman said economic diplomacy should get top priority as Bangladesh graduates from LDC status.

Shanchita Haque, director general of international trade, investment and technology, and former ambassadors Shameem Ahmed, Kamrul Ahsan and Shahed Akhter also spoke.

British High Commissioner Sarah Cooke, Turkish Ambassador Ramis Sen, Singapore Chargé d'Affaires Mitchell Lee and Joharat Adib Chowdhury were also present.



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


গ্রুপ-এ	গ্রুপ-বি	গ্রুপ-সি	গ্রুপ-ডি	গ্রুপ-ই	গ্রুপ-এফ	গ্রুপ-জি	গ্রুপ-এইচ	গ্রুপ-আই	গ্রুপ-জে	গ্রুপ-কে	গ্রুপ-এল	গ্রুপ-এম	গ্রুপ-এন	গ্রুপ-ও	গ্রুপ-পি	গ্রুপ-কিউ	গ্রুপ-আর	গ্রুপ-এস	গ্রুপ-টি	গ্রুপ-ইউ	গ্রুপ-ভি	গ্রুপ-ডব্লিউ	গ্রুপ-এক্স	
ব্র্যান্ড (Brand) ডেস্কটপ কম্পিউটার, ল্যাপটপ কম্পিউটার, সার্ভার, প্রিন্টার, স্ক্যানার।	ক্লোন (Clone) ডেস্কটপ কম্পিউটার।	নেটওয়ার্কিং ইকুইপমেন্ট-এক্সেসরিজ এন্ড ল্যান (LAN) ইকুইপমেন্ট।	ফটোকপিয়ার মেশিন, ফ্যাক্স মেশিন, পেপার প্রোডার মেশিন।	ইউপিএস, আইপিএস, ভোল্টেজ স্ট্যাবিলাইজার।	মাল্টিমিডিয়া প্রজেক্টর, মাল্টিমিডিয়া স্ক্রীন ও সাউন্ড সিস্টেম।	এয়ার কন্ডিশনার এবং রেফ্রিজারেটর, মাইক্রোওয়েভ ওভেন।	অফিস ও ট্রান্সপোর্ট স্টেশনারী।	স্কুল অব ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং এন্ড কম্পিউটার সায়েন্স-এর ল্যাব কম্পোনেন্ট ও ইকুইপমেন্ট: EEE/CSE.	মাথামেটিক্স এন্ড ন্যাচারাল সায়েন্স (এমএনএস), মাইক্রোবায়োলজী, বায়োটেকনোলজি, এ্যাপ্লাইড ফিজিক্স এন্ড ইলেক্ট্রনিক্স, ফিজিক্স, ফার্মেসী ডিপার্টমেন্ট-এর ল্যাব রাসায়নিক দ্রব্য/পদার্থ, গ্রাসওয়ার ও ইকুইপমেন্ট।	মুদ্রণ ও বাঁধাই কাজ (প্রিন্টিং প্রেস)।	বিজ্ঞাপন এজেন্ট।	ব্র্যান্ড অফিস ফার্নিচার (উইন ও স্টীল)।	নন-ব্র্যান্ড অফিস ফার্নিচার, রিপেয়ার ও রেনোভেশন (কার্পেট)।	এয়ার কন্ডিশনার এক্সেসরিজ (কম্প্রেশার/গ্যাস ইত্যাদি)।	ইলেক্ট্রিক এবং ইলেক্ট্রনিক্স আইটেম।	কম্পিউটার/আইটি এক্সেসরিজ।	সিসিটিভি, মোটর ডিভিউ/সিকিউরিটি ইকুইপমেন্ট।	ফায়ার ফাইটিং এন্ড সেকিউরিটি ইকুইপমেন্ট।	ইন্ডেন্ট ম্যানুজমেন্ট ও ব্রডকাস্টিং এন্ড প্রোডাকশন।	কম্পিউটার/আইটি এন্ড অফিস ইকুইপমেন্ট সার্ভিস ও রিপেয়ার।	ট্রাভেল এজেন্ট।	পিফট এন্ড মার্চেন্টাইজিং আইটেম।	ডিজিটাল প্রিন্টিং (পিভিসি ব্যানার, ফেস্টুন ইত্যাদি)।	

তালিকাভুক্তির সময়সীমা: ০২ (দুই) বছর (জুলাই-২০২৬ হতে জুন-২০২৮)।

সিডিউল সম্বন্ধে হোল্ডিং সময়সীমা এবং মূল্য: উপরোক্ত সূত্রিত গ্রুপে যে সকল প্রতিষ্ঠানের উল্লেখিত কাজে কমপক্ষে ০৩ (তিন) বছরের সক্রিয় গ্রুপে ব্যবসার অভিজ্ঞতা আছে শুধুমাত্র সে সকল প্রতিষ্ঠান আশ্রয়ী 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 (অফেরতযোগ্য) নথিদে জমা দিয়ে হিসাব বিভাগ, ব্র্যাক ইউনিভার্সিটি, টিকানাঃ খ-২২৪ প্রগতি সরণি, মেরুল বাজা, ঢাকা-১২১২ থেকে সংগ্রহ 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 টিকানায় 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 টা পর্যন্ত।



IUBAT—International University of Business Agriculture and Technology

Founded 1991 by Md. Alimullah Miyan



Observance of 9th Death Anniversary of IUBAT Founder

Professor Dr M Alimullah Miyan
(February 15, 1942 — May 10, 2017)
Founder and First Vice Chancellor of IUBAT

Remembering The Pioneer of Non-Government University in Bangladesh

Discussions session on the Life and Contribution of Professor Dr M Alimullah Miyan will be held at 11:30 AM on Sunday, May 10, 2026 in IUBAT Conference Room #227

Family members, relations, friends, colleagues, students and admirers of Prof Dr M Alimullah Miyan are cordially invited.

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INTERNATIONAL

UK PM vows to 'listen to voters' after polls drubbing

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer promised on Saturday he would "listen to voters" after his Labour party received a historic drubbing in local and regional elections.

A disillusioned electorate backed hard-right and nationalist parties in Thursday's ballots — Starmer's biggest electoral test since Labour ousted the Conservatives in 2024.

"The right lesson is to listen to voters," but it "doesn't mean tacking right or left", Starmer, who has faced calls to resign, wrote in The Guardian newspaper.

The anti-immigrant Reform UK party led by populist politician Nigel Farage made gains across



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets Suvendu Adhikari, newly elected Chief Minister of West Bengal state, and cabinet ministers during a swearing-in ceremony in Kolkata yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Putin chides Nato in speech at scaled-back Victory Day parade

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Saturday that his soldiers in Ukraine were fighting an "aggressive force" backed by all of Nato and described his war goals as "just", as he addressed a scaled back Victory Day parade on Red Square.

Putin has made the memory of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II a central narrative of his 25-year rule. Russian authorities typically mark the parade with pomp and grandeur.

But a spate of Ukrainian long range attacks in recent weeks prompted the Kremlin to ramp up security measures and downsize this year's celebrations.

The parade was vastly smaller compared to previous years, with no military hardware on display for the first time in nearly two decades and only a handful of foreign dignitaries in attendance — most of them leaders of Russia's close allies.

Both Moscow and Kyiv agreed to observe a



three-day ceasefire over the event, announced by US President Donald Trump. Moscow had threatened a "massive" strike on central Kyiv if Ukraine disrupted the proceedings.

In an address to the parade, attended by Russian military units as well as soldiers from North Korea, Putin invoked the Soviet victory to rally support for his army in Ukraine.

"The great feat of the generation of victors inspires the soldiers carrying out the goals of

the special military operation today," Putin said.

"They are confronting an aggressive force armed and supported by the entire Nato bloc. And despite this, our heroes move forward," he said.

"I firmly believe that our cause is just," he added later.

The speech drew a cool reception from some in Moscow, with internet outages and fatigue over the four-year Ukraine war casting a shadow over the events.

When asked how she felt on Victory Day, which marks the Soviet Union's defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, 36-year-old economist Elena replied: "Nothing."

"I need the internet, and I don't have it," she told AFP from central Moscow, saying she would not watch the parade.

After two failed attempts at truces this week by both Russia and Ukraine, Trump announced on Friday a three-day ceasefire between both sides would come into effect from May 9.



England, Scotland and Wales — though Scottish and Welsh parties took the biggest share of seats in those elections.

With almost all votes tallied, the results were grim for Labour.

Starmer has vowed to remain as Britain's prime minister but admitted the party had failed to sustain the public's trust that it was doing enough to deliver change.

Despite the scale of the electoral mauling no immediate move was made to challenge his leadership and cabinet colleagues appeared to publicly rally round.

Mothers in chars find hope

FROM PAGE 12

There were also cases where traditional birth attendants tried to deliver babies, and the child died during the process. When women here go into labour, people have no option except motorcycles or horse carts to take them to health facilities."

She said most women in the area experience repeated pregnancies, with some giving birth to as many as 12 or 13 children. Early marriage remains widespread, with many girls married off between the ages of 14 and 16, while family planning services are almost non-existent.

"Families often try delivering at home before bringing mothers here. By the time they arrive, both mother and baby [are in] critical condition."

In Bangladesh's remote char regions, where river erosion and isolation often cut communities off from basic services, healthcare has long been a matter of survival.

BRAC's CHARMS (Char Health and Resilience for Mothers and Society) project has been changing that reality through "Sushasthya" healthcare centres in Char Ghorjan [in Sirajganj], serving nearly 30,000 residents who previously lacked access to local maternal care.

Operating 24 hours a day, the centres provide safe delivery services, maternal care, vaccinations, diagnostic tests, and telemedicine support in one of Bangladesh's most climate-vulnerable and geographically isolated regions.

Taherima said, "Now almost everyone comes to this centre because there is no other place across these char villages where pregnant women can get treatment. We handle all normal deliveries here, but if complications arise and a normal delivery is not possible, we are still forced to refer patients to hospitals in Shahzadpur Upazila or Enayetpur."

The centre keeps motorcycles and horse carts ready for emergency transport. But even after reaching government hospitals, many women struggle to receive proper care and often prefer private hospitals — an option many cannot afford.

"In those cases, BRAC provides Tk 5,000 in assistance for referred patients," she said.

The facility, which operates with three midwives, one paramedic, and a 24-hour telemedicine doctor, now treats more patients than it was originally designed for.

"The maternal death rate has dropped significantly," Taherima said. "This healthcare project was planned for three years. But if the people here want it to continue, perhaps BRAC will extend it further. It's already been a year and a half

since we began."

Since opening, the BRAC-run facility has conducted more than 100 deliveries and referred 21 women for caesarean sections.

Before the health centre opened, many pregnant women in the char villages sought medical help only after complications had already turned life-threatening.

Community health workers recruited from the char villages are visiting homes to raise awareness about maternal healthcare, safe deliveries, and postnatal care, while BRAC works with midwives, adolescents, and community leaders to challenge long-standing taboos around institutional childbirth.

According to paramedic physician Amit Hasan Hridoy, more women in the remote char region are now seeking regular check-ups and early treatment, improving outcomes for mothers and newborns.

"However, early marriage remains a major concern. Many girls become pregnant before their bodies are ready," he said, adding that early pregnancies often leave both mothers and babies malnourished and vulnerable to complications.

Mohammad Jobbar Ali, a community leader in his 60s, said, "Maternal and infant deaths have fallen a lot compared to before. When this centre was first proposed, we believed it would change our lives, and it has."

"Our roads and transport are still very poor," he said. "Earlier, many mothers died on the way to the city while trying to get treatment. But now our situation is much better."

Although some nearby villages technically have government community clinics, Jobbar said residents rarely receive meaningful healthcare services there.

"It feels like neither the government nor anyone else even knows that so many people live here. Nobody thinks about us. But this BRAC health centre is saving our lives."

The healthcare project is currently scheduled to run for three years, but Jobbar said villagers are desperate for it to continue.

"When the project period ends, the centre is supposed to close. But we need it to survive. For us, this health centre is essential."

Mahfuzer Rahman, project manager of BRAC's CHARMS project, said the initiative is working not only to provide healthcare but also to improve the overall quality of life for people living in remote char communities.

"Through these healthcare services, we are trying to ensure they receive the treatment and support they need. Our goal is to ensure safe motherhood and childhood."

BNP grassroots

FROM PAGE 1

Minister Tarique Rahman sat with leaders and activists from across the country.

A dozen ministers, who are also senior BNP leaders, attended the meeting and presented their ministerial activities since taking office.

Party insiders said the meeting was part of a new internal review process through which ministers will brief party leaders and activists every four months on their work, plans, and progress.

A standing committee member said the initiative was aimed at creating a "party parliament" where grassroots leaders would be able to hear directly from ministers and raise questions.

"The prime minister said this will be like a party parliament. As there is accountability in parliament, there should also be accountability among party leaders and activists."

Twelve ministers, including those from the LGDR, finance, energy, health, and water resources ministries, attended the meeting along with members of the BNP standing committee. Each minister answered questions from party leaders and activists.

At the meeting, Tarique instructed leaders and activists to prepare for the upcoming upazila elections.

He also asked leaders at district, upazila and union levels to improve coordination and strengthen ties among themselves.

Party sources said the BNP national council will be held within this year. Before that, committees of all grassroots units will be formed through elections.

BNP's affiliated organisations would be reorganised before the national council, expected by December this year, he added.

In his address, Tarique called upon leaders and activists to support the government while maintaining discipline and public trust. The government would do its job, while the party would maintain its political relationship with the people.

He also instructed leaders not to depend on government officials and to keep the party's organisational activities active.

A major focus of the meeting was discipline at the grassroots.

Tarique asked party leaders and activists to remain united, follow organisational rules, and ensure that no one violates discipline.

He also instructed them to play a responsible role in maintaining peace and law and order at the local level.

BNP leadership believes that although the party is now in power, any excess, show of influence, or attempt by leaders and activists to take the law into their own hands could damage the government's image.

Owners' business interests often hurt

FROM PAGE 12

Speaking at the conference, Kamal Ahmed, also the consulting editor of The Daily Star, said the roots of the problem lie partly in how media houses came into existence. Under Bangladesh's Printing Presses and Publications (Declaration and Registration) Act, 1973, the barrier to entry for setting up a media outlet is just Tk 5 lakh — a threshold so low, he argued, that it has allowed anyone with political connections to obtain a licence and then find an industrialist to bankroll the operation.

He also called for mandatory voluntary disclosures from corporate-owned media outlets. "If a corporate house has stakes in a particular industry and its newsroom covers that industry, there should be a public disclosure of that conflict of interest," he said, adding that without such transparency, readers have no way of knowing whose interests a news organisation is serving.

Kamal proposed appointing a "readers' editor" in every newsroom to protect audience interests.

International media law expert Joan Barata added that Bangladesh's licensing regime is itself an anomaly.

"In most countries, there is no requirement to license a newspaper at all — only technical licences for frequency allocation are necessary for broadcast media."

The existence of such barriers, he argued, creates the conditions for political and business interests to control who enters the media landscape from the outset.

He said licensing is entirely separate from regulation — and regulation has nothing to do with the state.

"Self-regulation is about ethics; and the European Court of Human Rights has said that defining ethical and professional standards is not something states can do. It is something journalists should do... It is based on moral authority, not legal authority."

Joan also criticised the Bangladesh Press Council, saying it cannot genuinely be called self-regulation.

In a separate session, Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, said press freedom is inseparable from fundamental rights, freedom of speech, and accountability within the broader governance system.

"A 'winner-takes-all' or zero-sum game has been going on in Bangladesh's politics for a long time. The politics of money, muscle power, and partisanisation are controlling the entire governance system," he said, adding, "Every state institution has been subjected to extreme politicisation."

He observed that dissent and the disclosure of information are often treated as threats to monopoly power, negatively affecting the media.

Speaking about the growing influence of business interests in politics, Iftekharuzzaman said the proportion of MPs primarily involved in business rose from 17.5 percent in the country's first parliament to 60.9 percent in the current 13th Jatiya Sangsad.

He also said Bangladesh's performance in indexes related to democracy, rule of law, good governance, political stability, voice and accountability, civic space, and corruption remains "deeply embarrassing".

Kamal Ahmed said, "The media is a part of society. If there is no democracy in society, it is difficult to expect it in the media."

Interim govt curbed freedoms

FROM PAGE 12

On December 18, following the killing of Sharif Osman Hadi, a prominent leader of the July uprising, violent protests erupted. The offices of two media outlets — The Daily Star and Prothom Alo — were attacked and set on fire, the editor of the New Age newspaper was harassed, and cultural institution Chhayanaut was attacked.

"Oppressive restrictions continued to be imposed on the right to unionise, including excessive requirements for union registration, state interference in union activities, and arbitrary or unduly controlling registration processes," the report said.

After forming a commission to investigate enforced disappearances and signing the International Convention Against Enforced Disappearance in 2024, the interim government sought to implement the convention through a new ordinance.

The draft ordinance was initially criticised for failing to align with international human rights standards, particularly regarding the death penalty. It was also criticised for limiting command responsibility and failing to recognise the continuing nature of enforced disappearance as a crime. Some concerns were addressed in later drafts, and the ordinance was approved in December.

The UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances conducted a four-day technical visit in June, meeting government stakeholders and victims.

The group urged the government to establish a victim and witness protection system, strengthen the national Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, and expressed concern over continued widespread impunity.

Also in June 2025, the national Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances submitted its second interim report to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

The commission said it had received 1,837 complaints regarding enforced disappearances, of which 1,772 active cases were entered into its database after preliminary review.

Among them, 1,427 victims were reportedly found alive, while 345 remained missing. Based on its data, the commission found that 67 percent of enforced disappearances were linked to state agencies, including the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab). It also noted a "widespread and systematic culture of torture".

In February, the UN released findings from its fact-finding investigation, which found reasonable grounds to believe that the former government and its security and

Press freedom

FROM PAGE 12

set fire to The Daily Star office must be punished.

The newspaper should also try to unmask the culprits through investigation reports, he said.

He also urged the paper to organise roundtables and seminars in different regions of the country, not just in the capital, where it regularly organises such events.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said that MPs must support independent journalism because it is one of the major supporting forces for anyone seeking to earn people's trust and understand public opinion.

He said ruling party MPs may not always get the truth from bureaucracy, administration or intelligence channels, while opposition MPs often face the same problem when relying on information from party loyalists.

"Truth will come to you through independent journalism. Please always remember this," he said, addressing the lawmakers.

He also reminded the MPs of their dual existence. They are nominated by parties, but become MPs through people's votes.

"Please do not forget that one reason for your existence is the voters, and another is the party. Your loyalty should be to both sides," he said.

Mahfuz Anam said MPs often hesitate to speak for people due to party directives, pressure or fear.

Referring to the BNP government's "Bangladesh First" policy, he said it must be reflected in political thought, words, values and actions.

"When you say, 'Bangladesh First,' your entire thinking must put Bangladesh first, not your party first," he said, adding that politicians should not claim to put Bangladesh first while insisting the country's interest is served only if their party wins.

"At this moment, parliament can become a dream place for us. MPs can make that happen," he said, urging greater accountability from the new government.

He said one of the major failures of past governments, particularly the "fascist government" of the last 15 years, was blocking every path of free expression. Citing the Digital Security Act, he said it was used to take away people's freedom, humiliate them and send them to jail. "The people, not those who used the law, have ultimately won," he added.

The programme began at 4:30pm with the national anthem and a minute of silence to honour the martyrs of the Language Movement, the struggle for independence, the Liberation War, and the July 2024 uprising. A documentary on the newspaper's 35-year history, highlighting last year's arson attack, was screened, alongside a photography exhibition.

The event opened with a speech delivered by Dipankar Roy, Khulna correspondent for The Daily Star, welcoming the guests.

Other speakers included Swapan Kumar Guha, executive director of Rupantar; Kudrat-e-Khuda, former president of Sachetan Nagorik Committee; SK Noor Alam, representative of Waterkeepers Bangladesh of the Pashur river; Enamul Haq, former president of Khulna Press Club; Mostafa Sarwar, current president of the club; and Bibhas Mandal, a farmer from Batiaghata.

Members of the Khulna Hawkers Union were also present and exchanged greetings.

The Khulna celebrations followed central anniversary events at the newspaper's Dhaka office on April 24–25. Earlier, the divisional tour began in Chattogram on May 2.

1 held over torture

FROM PAGE 12

According to the child's uncle, she could not bear the humiliation and took her own life. "We want justice," he told journalists.

The victim's father filed a case against four people, including Hannan Mollah, with Chatmohar Police Station the same night. He accused them of torture and abetment to suicide.

Speaking to The Daily Star last night, Golam Mostafa, officer-in-charge of Chatmohar Police Station, said police were trying to arrest the other accused.

"In our primary investigation, we confirmed it was a suicide. We are investigating the allegations of torture," he said, adding that the body was sent to hospital for autopsy.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Free press must have editorial autonomy

State, media owners must help protect independent journalism

Journalism cannot act as a watchdog if a country's news media houses fail to establish strong editorial institutions that can resist financial and political pressure. This truth was again reiterated by speakers at a journalism conference in the capital on Friday. Unfortunately, for decades, Bangladesh's media houses have struggled with this core responsibility, often giving in to political, financial, and even societal pressure. A more recent threat, which throttles investigative reporting and even fact-based opinion, is mob violence—a phenomenon that this daily experienced first-hand last December.

Fear, partisanship, and subservience to the ruling party have long characterised Bangladesh's media landscape, particularly during Sheikh Hasina's regime. Any exposé of party leaders, security agencies, or private-sector actors that bolstered the regime's grip on power was met with measures ranging from legal harassment to enforced disappearance. Media houses either resorted to self-censorship or became the government's mouthpiece, not only exaggerating news but at times disseminating misinformation. This led to an erosion of trust in mainstream media, and many turned to social media newsfeeds that often spread misinformation and disinformation. Speaking at the conference, Zaffar Abbas, editor of Pakistan's *Dawn* newspaper, aptly summarised the danger of self-censorship: it is often more damaging than direct censorship because media outlets cannot publicly admit to it.

Sadly, the situation of self-censorship has not improved significantly after the fall of Sheikh Hasina's authoritarian regime. What is more, the recommendations of the Media Reform Commission formed by the interim government have remained unimplemented for more than a year. These recommendations not only aimed to secure the financial stability of the media but also proposed measures to ensure journalists' protection, accountability, and ethical practices within the industry. Financial stability is essential for journalism, as emphasised by Tauhidul Islam of Transparency International Bangladesh at the conference.

However, in this era of clickbait and constant news bombardment, the space for investigative journalism is also shrinking. Zaffar Abbas observed that the prioritisation of profit over investment in investigative journalism by media owners—not only in Bangladesh but also in India and Pakistan—would endanger the very existence of journalism. He described how such important stories are being washed away by a "flood of information and misinformation"—a new form of censorship that does not threaten or abduct journalists but kills the stories that can hold power to account.

A society that relies on unverified social media noise can expect nothing but chaos—benefiting only a small circle close to power. The rest of the population bears the cost in rising poverty, lawlessness, and violations of rights. Therefore, we urge the government to take note of the wisdom shared at the conference and help build a free press in Bangladesh by implementing the recommendations of the Media Reform Commission seriously. Media house owners must also recognise the true purpose of this industry and act accordingly to ensure its proper functioning. Without commitment from both actors, the Fourth Estate will exist in name only, rather than in practice.

Khulna city needs its bus service back

Residents shouldn't be left dependent on three-wheelers

We're concerned about the collapse of bus services in Khulna city that has been depriving its 18 lakh residents as well as visitors of an affordable public transport option. As per a report by this daily, the once-vibrant bus services that connected the divisional city with its outskirts and key neighbourhoods have disappeared over the years, leaving commuters dependent on the costlier and often unsafe three-wheelers, including CNG-run and battery-powered auto-rickshaws and easy bikes. This, understandably, has affected commuting, especially for students and low- and middle-income groups who must spend more on transport while remaining vulnerable to periodic fare hikes. In recent weeks, for example, fares have reportedly risen by up to 20 percent due to increases in fuel prices.

Our report cites residents and activists who lamented what the gradual disappearance of bus services has meant for the city. They recalled the time when Khulna had a widely used bus network that enabled people from different neighbourhoods and surrounding upazilas to travel affordably and efficiently. In the 1990s, more than 60 buses reportedly operated on various routes. As recently as 2005, around 50 buses were still running within the city. Things started to change rapidly after 2010, when CNG- and diesel-run three-wheelers hit the roads, and by 2017, the number of buses had dropped to just five before completely going off the roads in 2018.

Their total absence today has to do with the unchecked expansion and dominance of three-wheelers, combined with the failure of the relevant authorities to preserve or revive bus operations. There are allegations that bus operators often faced obstruction from transport groups at key city points, discouraging them from continuing services. Even an initiative by the BRTC that launched five double-deckers ended in failure; it had to take them off allegedly in the face of opposition from three-wheeler drivers' unions. Some local political leaders with close ties to these unions are reportedly resisting moves to relaunch bus services. Although, when contacted, the Khulna City Corporation administrator referred to plans to relaunch services, possibly through electric buses, it may be a while before residents can access such a service again.

We don't need to reiterate the importance of a structured public transport system in a city of this importance. It is vital that the authorities help revive the bus services without delay, regardless of any opposition from vested interest groups. Dedicated bus routes, strict regulation of all modes of transport and related groups, and protection against any unlawful obstruction are also essential. All this will also help improve traffic, which the city needs.

Freight belongs on rail, but how to make it work in practice?



AHAMEDUL KARIM CHOWDHURY

Ahamedul Karim Chowdhury is adjunct faculty member at Bangladesh Maritime University.

In a previous article, I argued that Bangladesh must rethink its reliance on a road-based transport system along the Dhaka-Chattogram corridor and move towards a more energy-efficient model. This article builds on that discussion by focusing on how such a transition can be implemented in practice. The railway offers a promising solution, but for it to play a meaningful role, Bangladesh Railway must overcome various long-standing structural and institutional challenges. Without reform, even the best ideas will not deliver results. The answer, therefore, lies not in choosing rail in principle, but in making it work in practice. This requires a clear and practical roadmap.

Firstly, structural inefficiencies must be addressed. Bangladesh's railway system still uses a mix of metre gauge, broad gauge, and dual gauge lines. This creates delays and makes operations more complex. In many cases, cargo must be shifted from one system to another. For a busy corridor like Dhaka-Chattogram, this increases time and cost. A gradual plan to standardise the gauge—especially on major freight routes—can make train movement faster, smoother, and more reliable. This is a basic but foundational step.

Secondly, freight must be given priority. At present, the railway mainly focuses on passenger services. As a result, the railway has not been able to meet the growing demand for goods movement. There are not enough locomotives, wagons, or trained drivers to transport freight. Indeed, many freight trains depend on spare capacity from passenger services. This makes scheduling uncertain. If businesses cannot depend on rail, they will continue to use trucks. This is why investment in freight capacity is essential, so that the railway can become a reliable option for industries.

Thirdly, institutional reform is needed. Bangladesh Railway is run



FILE PHOTO: STAR

With a mix of private and state funding, Bangladesh could commit to a future of more efficient and cost-effective goods transport.

almost entirely by the government. While this ensures control, it also limits flexibility and investment opportunities. There is a strong case for allowing private participation in freight services under clear rules. This does not mean full privatisation, but private operators could run freight trains on selected routes while the government keeps oversight. This will invite investment, improve service quality, and increase efficiency.

Fourthly, infrastructure must be linked to logistical planning. Building railway lines alone is not enough; the system must include proper logistical facilities, especially inland container depots (ICD). ICDS near industrial areas—such as Narayanganj, Narsingdi,

Pubail, Gazipur, and northern regions like Nilphamari and Rangpur—can reduce long distance trucking. Today, many goods travel long distances by road before reaching the port. With ICDS, cargo can be collected near factories and then moved in bulk by rail.

Private investors have already expressed an interest in developing

Narayanganj-Chattogram chord line. This will reduce travel distance and time, while also bolstering capacity. At the same time, new economic hubs like Matarbari port and Mirsarai industrial zone should be connected by rail. Expanding rail links towards the northwest, including areas like Nilphamari, could also enhance regional development.

Transport is not just about moving goods. It is also about energy and cost. Every additional truck increases diesel use and import costs. Rail, by contrast, uses much less fuel and can reduce overall transport expenses. Financing this transition will require a practical approach. Large railway infrastructure will still have to rely on public funding and investment from development partners. But ICDS, rolling stock, and freight services can be definite opportunities for private investment.

A structured financing model will help reduce pressure on government resources. Public-private partnerships (PPP) can play a key role, especially in locations where demand is emerging for alternative modes of transport for goods. In areas such as Nilphamari and Rangpur, private investors could bear the initial risk in developing rail-based logistics facilities. At the same time, the PPP Authority can support these projects through viability gap funding, making them financially viable while attracting investors. This approach will allow the government to support development without carrying the full financial burden.

Around the world, countries are linking transport planning with their energy and economic strategies. India is investing in dedicated freight corridors. China is strengthening rail links between ports and industries. Europe continues to rely on rail for efficient and low-emission logistics. Bangladesh can and should move in the same direction. The country has already shown that it can execute large infrastructure projects. The next step is to make those investments smarter. The choice is not between road and rail. Both are needed. Roads will remain important for short distances. But without a strong rail system, the overall network will remain costly and fuel-intensive.

Building a modern railway system will take time, of course. But with the right planning, investment, and reform, it can form a key part of Bangladesh's economic future.

Credit isn't enough – farmers need assets to build income



SABA EL KABIR

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Bangladesh has built a considerable rural credit system. Each year, tens of thousands of crores are supplied to the countryside. But too little of this money becomes machinery, storage, irrigation, livestock, processing capacity, or producer-owned assets. The result is a rural economy that borrows repeatedly without accumulating enough to grow. On paper, the stagnation makes little sense. Disbursement targets are routinely met and national financial inclusion metrics appear strong. Agricultural credit targets continue to expand. New policy instruments are being introduced to deepen farmers' access to finance and machinery. The system moves more capital into the rural economy than it has at any point before. But the question remains as to whether this credit builds anything that lasts.

Agriculture still contributes some 11 percent to our GDP and supports a large share of livelihoods. Its weakness affects through employment, consumption, food prices, rural demand, and banking sector exposure. Its upside will also travel through the same channels. Better rural finance can turn agriculture into a stronger source of income, demand, and resilience.

Decades ago, microloans were a necessary innovation. They proved that the rural poor were bankable. As opposed to formal banking, these loans provided liquidity. But the rural economy still hasn't moved far from that model. In 2024, Microcredit Regulatory Authority-licensed

microfinance institutions (MFIs) disbursed more than Tk 263,000 crore across all loan categories. Scheduled banks disbursed Tk 37,154 crore under targeted agricultural and rural credit. The figures are not identical categories, yet they show where rural financial delivery capacity now sits. Commercial banks often lack the infrastructure to underwrite rural risk directly. Many meet central bank-mandated agricultural targets by channelling bulk capital through MFIs.

By the time outsourced capital reaches the farmer, it carries additional intermediation costs, meaning that subsidised credit reaches the final borrower at a much higher price than the headline policy rate suggests. The subsidy is priced out before it reaches the farm. Bangladesh Bank has recognised this cost shifting and recently mandated that banks disburse at least half of their agricultural targets through their own networks, which should force the development of genuine last-mile infrastructure. But the conventional banking behemoth will likely move slowly.

The dominant microfinance model is better at stabilising consumption than financing capital formation. Small, high-frequency loans do not suit the purchase of machinery, storage, irrigation, and processing capacity. These assets still depend on subsidy, informal capital, or external ownership. Microcredit once promised a bridge to commercial banking. However, it now keeps rural borrowers inside a narrow loop of liquidity and repayment.

Formal banks also misread the rural economy when they lend directly. Finance runs on monthly calendars, while agriculture runs on cycles of planting, growth, harvest, storage, and sale. Rural lending needs to be backed by knowledge about crops, seasons, markets, and communities. It cannot rely only on conventional customer files.

In Panjor Bhanga, a flood-prone community in northern Bangladesh, a woman named Renu Bala helped build a women's milk cooperative around a simple ambition: buy better cattle, produce more milk, and earn a more stable income. But they did not have the collateral. At a training programme, she learned about a credit policy for small dairy businesses offering lower interest rates and longer repayment periods. She still had to go from bank to bank before one agreed to lend to her. With that loan, the cooperative bought Friesian cows. Production rose, the loan was repaid, and the group expanded.

The lesson is not that credit solved everything, but that the right kind of credit allowed income to form around an asset.

Nearly half of our national agricultural lending is absorbed by seasonal crop loans used for seeds, fertiliser, and diesel. These loans keep production moving but they rarely build the asset base that can help raise productivity over time. Instead, the harvest comes in, the debt is cleared, and the farmer starts again from zero. The problem does not end at credit. Farmers work through the season to keep crops alive, then often lose pricing power after harvest. Without local storage, many sell immediately when prices are at their weakest. Intermediaries capture margins that should remain with producers. After all, a farmer who cannot hold produce cannot negotiate value.

The financing inequity is also geographic. Rural Bangladesh

operates as a net exporter of capital. The banking system moves savings out of the countryside more easily than it supports local asset formation. Rural deposits move towards the city while rural proposals for harvesters, storage, irrigation, and processing face rejection. Therefore, our core metric of success must shift from credit volume to the creation of productive rural assets.

Ownership matters as much as access. Too often, financed agricultural assets belong to absentee landlords or urban investors. Meanwhile, credit follows land titles and production remains under-credited. The farmer operates the economy without owning the asset base that allows the economy to grow. To correct this, we need finance that creates assets and allows producers to own them.

The tools already exist. Digital transaction histories can support credit assessment where land records are weak. Warehouse receipts can turn stored produce into collateral and help farmers wait for better prices. Equipment leasing and shared ownership models can make machinery accessible without unsuitable debt burdens. District level lending discipline can ensure that rural deposits return as meaningful local commercial credit.

Renu Bala's case shows the difference between credit that passes through a village and credit that stays there as capital. The cooperative did not need another short loan to manage scarcity. It needed finance that was patient enough to buy an income-generating asset and wait for that asset to generate earnings.

The first phase of financial inclusion gave rural Bangladesh access to the system. The next phase must help rural producers build and own assets that generate income. Without this shift, rural growth will remain visible in credit data but absent from lived realities.

What we can learn from Sweden's rethink of digital classrooms



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JANNATUL NAYM PIEAL

Sweden is currently doing something that, a decade ago, would have seemed unthinkable for one of Europe's most digitally advanced societies: it is pulling back from using screens in classrooms. After years of equipping students with laptops and tablets, the Swedish government is now encouraging a return to printed textbooks, handwritten work, and reduced screen exposure—especially for younger children.

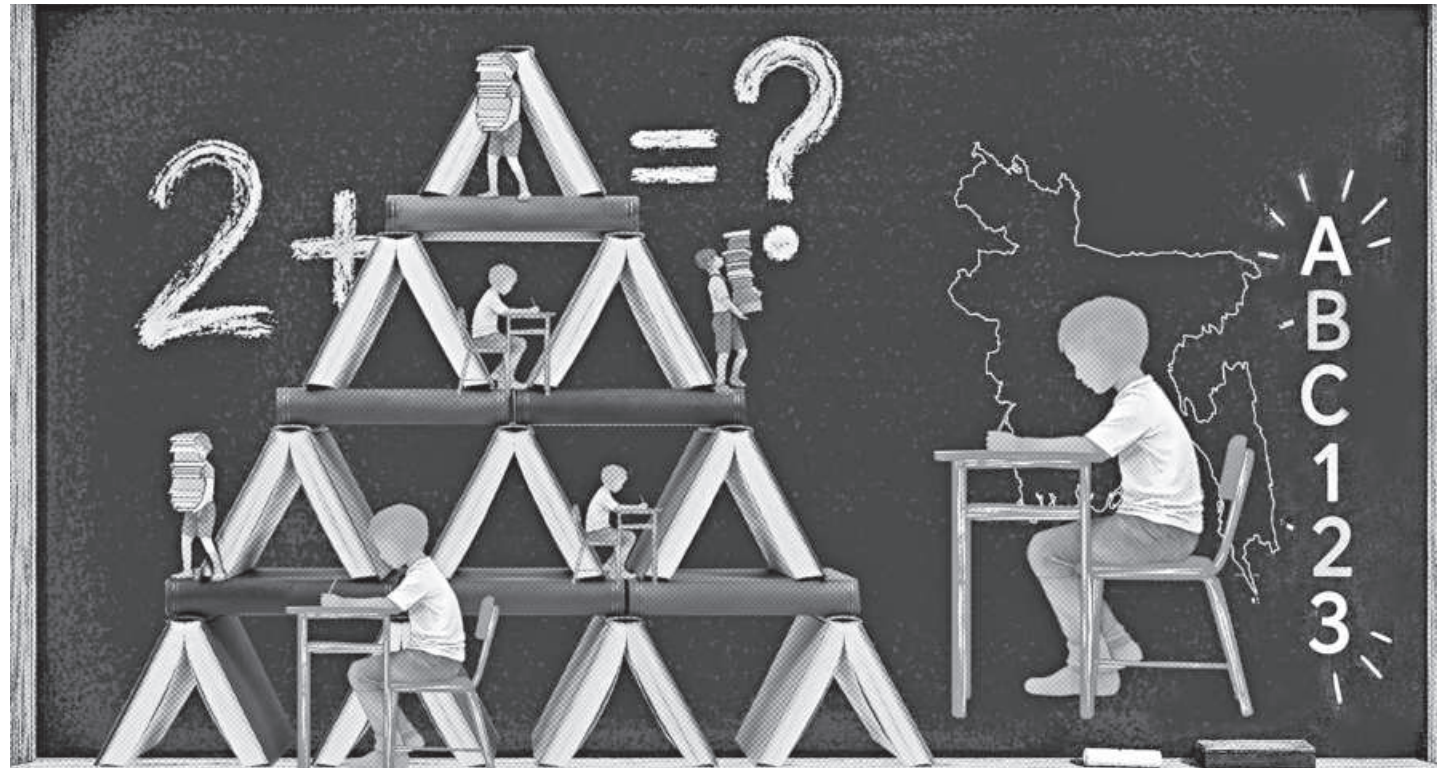
The shift reflects a growing concern that heavy reliance on digital tools may be weakening students' ability to concentrate and is affecting their reading proficiency. Backed in part by findings linked to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), policymakers argue that core skills such as reading, writing, and basic comprehension are more effectively developed through traditional, paper-based learning. This is reinforced by other evidence as well: despite Sweden's strong digital reputation, a 2023 study under the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS) found that four out of 10 Swedish students did not reach a basic level of digital competence.

That said, the recent policy shift is not being framed as a rejection of technology. Instead, it is presented as a correction to what officials see as an overextension of digital learning in schools.

Still, the move has sparked debate. Critics caution that reducing screen-based education too sharply could leave students less prepared for a labour market that is increasingly shaped by automation, data-driven systems, and artificial intelligence. In a country closely associated with global tech innovation, the central tension remains how to strengthen foundational learning without weakening digital competitiveness.

But while Sweden is trying to recalibrate after years of deep digital integration, Bangladesh is still at a much earlier and more uneven stage of a similar journey.

A recent survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics offers a snapshot of this reality. It shows that 53.4 percent of people in the country use the internet, while 88.4 percent use mobile phones. But access to devices that support deeper learning remains limited, as



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

only 11.3 percent use computers. The digital divide is also geographic, with 75.7 percent internet usage in urban areas compared to 43.6 percent in rural regions. Cost remains a major barrier, with 43.6 percent of respondents saying they avoid using the internet due to high prices.

Beyond access, the survey highlights how limited digital capability still is. The most common ICT skill is copy-paste, performed by 84.4 percent of users, a figure that effectively captures the level of everyday digital literacy. Usage patterns also reflect shallow engagement: 64.4 percent of users search for government job-related information, 49.8 percent consume sports content, and only 11.6 percent engage in online shopping.

What these figures point to is not just a connectivity gap, but also a gap in depth of internet usage. Digital tools are widely present,

but their utility remains functional. The tools required for creation, analysis, or advanced problem-solving are still limited for most users. This gap is reflected in the education system, where technology has expanded in presence but not fully in purpose.

Over the past decade, Bangladesh has invested heavily in ICT-based learning under its "Digital Bangladesh" agenda. Multimedia classrooms have been introduced in thousands

expanding multimedia classrooms, introducing smart learning environments, and increasing access to basic devices for teachers through initiatives often described as "one teacher, one tab" approaches. At the same time, the focus remains on using technology to support employability rather than fully replacing traditional classroom structures.

More recently, the government moved

Bangladesh's structural limitations further complicate the picture. Most students still depend primarily on mobile phones rather than computers, limiting opportunities to develop advanced digital skills. Rural schools continue to lag behind urban institutions in terms of both infrastructure and reliability of internet access, while teachers' capacity to deliver effective ICT-based instruction varies significantly. In many cases, technology is still used mainly to replicate traditional teaching methods by presenting lectures and notes in a digital form, without fundamentally changing the underlying emphasis on memorisation and examination performance.

Against this backdrop, international assessments point to persistent weaknesses and disparity in the broader system. A 2023 World Bank report highlighted Bangladesh's continuing challenges in education, including lower learning outcomes, uneven access to quality schooling in rural areas, and limited investment in education infrastructure.

In the meantime, digital technology has already moved well beyond the classroom and into everyday life, particularly for children. Even where it is not yet contributing meaningfully to learning, it is already shaping their attention spans, behaviour, and daily routines. Many children spend long hours on mobile games and social media outside school hours. In some households, even very young children have developed a strong dependence on screens, where everyday activities such as eating or emotional regulation are tied to their access to a video playing in front of them. In fact, a 2024 study on children in Bangladesh found that around 86 percent of preschool-aged children show signs of smartphone dependence.

Technology is not only something being introduced into classrooms; it is something that has already become embedded in childhood itself, mostly outside the control of schools or learning systems.

Seen together, Sweden and Bangladesh represent different points along the same global transition. Sweden is now questioning the effects of having gone too far with digitalisation in education, while Bangladesh is still trying to ensure that digital tools produce consistent and meaningful learning outcomes at all.

Ultimately both are confronting the same issue: that technology does not automatically improve education. Its impact depends on how it is structured, how deeply it is integrated into teaching, and whether it strengthens learning or simply changes its format. In Bangladesh's case, the challenge now extends beyond classrooms—towards a generation already shaped by technology long before education systems have fully adapted to it.

How to solve the street vendor crisis sustainably



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MD RAKIBUL HASAN

Often in urban Bangladesh, footpaths are cleared of street vendors so that pedestrians can move about comfortably. But it only takes a few days or even hours before they start coming back, crowding the footpaths again. Although street vendor eviction from footpaths ensures that people can walk around without worrying about getting injured, thousands of vendors end up losing their livelihoods overnight. This issue is a failure of governance.

Dhaka alone has 300,000 to 500,000 street vendors, and more than 80 lakh Dhaka residents rely on them daily for affordable food. The informal sector makes up around 40-43 percent of Bangladesh's GDP and accounts for over 84 percent of the entire labour force. It is time policymakers figure out how to make this sector a productive one rather than a persistent headache.

This issue is not unique to Dhaka and has already been addressed through established models elsewhere. The situation Singapore faced during the 1960s and 1970s closely resembled what Dhaka faces now. Instead of evicting hawkers indefinitely, the government relocated them to purpose-built hawker centres with proper sanitation, electricity, and waste management. These centres became popular community spaces showcasing diverse cultures and cuisines, eventually earning UNESCO recognition as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2020.

India adopted a legislative route with the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, which protects vendors from arbitrary eviction, mandates

citywide registration, provides identity cards, and designates vending and non-vending zones. Crucially, it created Town Vending Committees with actual vendor representation, helping reduce extortion and enabling formal taxation. Implementation across India's thousands of cities has been slow and uneven, but cities that applied the law seriously have seen real improvements.

Kuala Lumpur also turned its night markets into tourist attractions without disrupting daytime pedestrian movement. What unites all the successful cities is the principle of time-sharing where pedestrian zones are kept free of vendors during peak hours but used by vendors during off-peak times.

In the case of Bangladesh, before arriving at the solutions, the reasons behind repeated failures must be understood.

First, vendors return because they have no other way to survive. Expulsion without providing an alternative is not a solution, but rather a postponement.

Second, political interference distorts enforcement. In many Dhaka neighbourhoods, local political networks profit by collecting informal fees from vendors in exchange for protection from authorities. Any meaningful reform must break this extortion cycle. Otherwise, formalised vending zones will simply reproduce the same corruption in a new setting.

Third, the absence of legal recognition leaves vendors permanently vulnerable, giving authorities no tool except eviction. Without formal status, there is no

accountability on either side.

The answer is not bulldozers; it is smarter governance that tackles root causes at every level.

A digital registration system is the necessary foundation. A register of licensed vendors organised by wards, trades, and tenures will distinguish legitimate vendors from those who have plotted to encroach. It would also strip informal brokers of their extortion leverage, replacing backroom arrangements with a straightforward relationship between vendors and city authorities.

Dedicated vending zones on underutilised government land must be established before enforcement is escalated. These spaces need basic infrastructure—hygiene facilities, clean water, and waste disposal—not grand architecture. Dhaka South City Corporation has already proposed eight night-market sites. That proposal deserves immediate funding and implementation, not another round of committee discussions. On April 30, 2026, the DSCC and DNCC jointly launched the "Dhaka City Hawker Management Policy 2026," issuing QR-coded digital ID cards to over 300 hawkers and relocating them to designated vending zones across the city.

Time-sharing models can resolve much of the conflict over public space. Keeping main footpaths clear during peak commute hours while permitting regulated vending from the evening onward is a workable compromise that several Asian cities already run without serious difficulty.

Ward-level management committees consisting of city corporation officials, law enforcement, and elected vendor representatives should oversee implementation with genuine decision-making authority, not advisory roles. People respect rules they helped create and resist rules which are imposed on them. Any relocation also needs to be complemented by

rehabilitation services that include temporary financial assistance as well as microcredit opportunities. Without such cushioning, relocation will merely move poverty elsewhere without solving the problem.

Scepticism towards these solutions is understandable. Bangladesh does not have Singapore-level institutional capacity, and licensing schemes can easily become new avenues for corruption.

But the answer lies in sequencing. Start with two or three pilot wards—

say, one each in Dhaka North and South. Introduce the full framework, monitor, and measure against published metrics. What works gets scaled. What fails gets corrected before it spreads.

The informal sector's contribution to Bangladesh's economy and to millions of lives is too substantial to address with force alone. Registration, zoning, and genuine support would make cities more walkable, reduce congestion, improve public health, and bring informal GDP into the

formal tax base.

The streets of Dhaka belong to all its people—the commuter who must dodge traffic to reach work and the hawker whose stall is the difference between feeding a family and leaving them hungry. These two needs are not in conflict. With honest political will, evidence-based planning, and real inclusion of the people most affected, the hawker problem can shift from an embarrassment into an example of practical, human-centred urban governance.

Government of the People's of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Rapid Action Battalion-12
Hatikumrul, Salanga, Sirajganj
www.rab.gov.bd

Invitation For e-Tender

For financial year 2025-2026, e-Tender is Invited in the national e-GP system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of.

SL	Tender ID No & Reference	Description of Goods	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing/Opening Date & Time
1.	Tender ID No: 1270415 Ref: RAB-12/REV/2025-2026/qtr-4 Date: 10/05/2026	Edible Oil (S/Oil)	24 May 2026 11.15	24 May 2026 14.01
2.	Tender ID No: 1272432 Ref: RAB-12/REV/2025-2026/qtr-4/Dal Date: 10/05/2026	High Quality Local Mashur Dal	24 May 2026 11.15	24 May 2026 14.01

This is an online tender, where only e-tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-tender, registration in the national e-GP system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the national e-GP system portal have to be deposited in online through any registered bank branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Tenderer having clarity requirements are requested to contact at 01777711202 (Assistant Director, Adj. RAB-12).

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 র‍্যাব-১২, সিরাজগঞ্জ

GD-1068



Chanchal with his mother



Mithila with her mother



Siam with his mother

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

MOTHER'S DAY SPECIAL

'My mother, my first INSPIRATION'

"My passion for work, my dedication, and my ability to stay committed until I successfully complete something — I learned all of that from my mother," she shared. "She is my inspiration. She is everything to me. Her contributions to my life are beyond words. A mother can only be compared to another mother."

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

As Mother's Day returns once again, people everywhere take a moment to celebrate and cherish mothers who played great roles in all aspects of their lives.

While children love their mothers every single day, this occasion often becomes a special opportunity to express that affection more openly and wholeheartedly.

Many choose to reflect on memories, sacrifices, and lessons shared with their mothers — and celebrities are no exception. Speaking to The Daily Star, several stars opened up about the immense influence their mothers have had on both their personal and professional journeys.

My mother is my greatest inspiration: Rafiath Rashid Mithila

Actor and singer Rafiath Rashid Mithila spoke with deep admiration about her mother, describing her as an exceptionally hardworking and dedicated person.

"My mother is a teacher, and there is so much one can learn from her," Mithila said. "She has done so much for me and for our entire family. On this special day, I want to express my deepest love and respect for her."

She added that although she loves her mother every day, Mother's Day makes that love feel even more profound.

"My passion for work, my dedication, and my ability to stay committed until I successfully complete something — I learned all of that from my mother," she shared. "She is my inspiration. She is everything to me. Her contributions to my life are beyond words. A mother can only be compared to another mother."

My mother taught me strength and independence: Tanzika Amin

Actress Tanzika Amin described her mother as one of the most important people in her life, crediting her for shaping both her career and personal values.

"My mother means so much to me," she

said. "From my career to my personal life, her contribution has been immense. She managed everything while working a full-time job. She would go to the office in the morning and then return home to take care of the family."

Watching her mother balance responsibilities with resilience taught Tanzika valuable life lessons. "She always wanted me to become independent and self-reliant. She believed women should achieve things on their own and never depend entirely on others."

Calling her mother "the best person" she has ever known, Tanzika also revealed how



Tanzika with her mother

supportive her mother was when she entered the entertainment industry.

"I have come this far because of my mother's love, prayers, and support," she said. "There were difficult times in my life when I could have broken down completely, but my mother gave me courage. She stood beside me and reminded me that I was not alone. She never reacted with anger — only with love and strength. Everything I learned about resilience came from her."

Seeing happiness in my mother's eyes is priceless: Siam Ahmed

Popular actor Siam Ahmed reflected on how

his mother always prioritised education and dreamed of seeing him build a strong academic career.

"My mother always wanted me to excel in my studies," Siam said. "She studied at the University of Dhaka and completed master's degrees in three subjects. At one point, she wanted me to become a chartered accountant."

Inspired by his parents, both of whom studied at the University of Dhaka, Siam pursued higher education seriously and later studied law abroad.

However, acting was never part of his mother's original plan for him.

"She wanted me to finish my education and establish a conventional career," he explained. "Even though she did not initially want me to join showbiz, my journey eventually began there and continues to this day."

The actor fondly recalled the moment he received his first National Film Award.

"That day, I saw pure joy and pride in my mother's eyes," he said. "Perhaps she finally felt that her son had achieved something meaningful. Now, when she sees the love I receive from people, it makes her happy. And as a son, being able to see happiness in my mother's eyes is truly priceless."

She has always been a selfless person: Chanchal Chowdhury

Chanchal Chowdhury is thankful to his mother for not just giving birth to him, but being the ultimate support of everything in the family, as his father was a teacher and he would be busy with his job.

As they were multiple siblings growing up together, he shared how his mother kept them all together with love, affection and the attention required. "My mother would give all her time for us, and she has always been a selfless person, and all she wanted for us is that we become good human beings. She is the greatest inspiration to me and she embodies the word 'selflessness'. I cannot thank her enough for not only giving us life, but taking the best care of us at all times."

Abdullah Mohammad Saad's 'ANNIE' cast revealed

After winning hearts with *Rehana Maryam Noor*, Abdullah Mohammad Saad is back in the spotlight with his latest mini-series, *ANNIE*. The series will have its world premiere at the SerienCamp Festival in Germany.

Produced by Ehsanul Haque Babu, the series stars Nazifa Tushi in the lead role, along with Yash Rohan, Sarika Sabrin, Farhana Mithu, among others, in key roles.

The story follows Annie, a 27-year-old nurse struggling to survive while caring for her siblings. The series explores themes of violence, inequality, and mistrust in relationships between men and women.

ANNIE will premiere at the SerienCamp Festival, Germany's first festival dedicated entirely to television series. Every year, around 20 selected series from different genres and countries are screened on the big screen at the festival, and *ANNIE* will be among this year's featured titles.

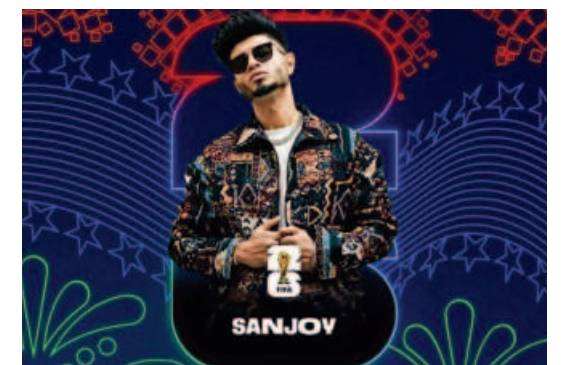


Sanjoy to perform at FIFA World Cup opening ceremony

Bangladeshi-American DJ Sanjoy is set to perform at the opening ceremony of the FIFA World Cup 2026, jointly hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico. He will appear at SoFi Stadium on June 12 ahead of the United States' match against Paraguay.

Sanjoy has already gained recognition across South Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America through his music. He is among a lineup of international artistes performing across the three host nations. The US ceremony will feature Katy Perry and Lisa, while performers across venues include J Balvin, Anitta, Danny Ocean, Elyanna, and Vegeedream.

FIFA will stage separate opening ceremonies in each host country ahead of kickoff.



'RABINDRA UTSAB 1433'

Chhayanaut marks Tagore's birth anniversary with evocative renditions

NAVEEN ISLAM TOREE

The first evening of Chhayanaut's two-day *Rabindra Utsab 1433* unfolded on May 8 at the Chhayanaut Milonayoton, as artistes and audiences gathered to celebrate the 165th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore through music, recitation and performance.

For Bengalis, Rabindranath Tagore's birth anniversary remains more than a cultural observance. From classrooms and family gatherings to national ceremonies and cultural festivals, Tagore's presence remains deeply woven into Bengali life, making occasions such as Rabindra Utsab



feel both personal and communal at once.

The programme began at 6:30 pm with an opening address by Dr Sarwar Ali, president of the festival, who formally inaugurated the celebration. Reflecting on Tagore's enduring influence on Bengali 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 up in soft blue lighting, framed by plants surrounding a towering portrait of Tagore at centre stage. The evening opened with a group dance performance of *Bhubanjora Ashonkhami* by Chhayanaut artistes, setting a tranquil tone for the programme. Throughout the

event, performers presented a carefully curated selection of Rabindra Sangeet, blending solo and ensemble performances that explored themes of devotion, love, humanity and nature.

Familiar compositions such as *Tumi Robe Nirobe*, *Borisho Dhora-majhe Shantiro Bari*, *Aji Bijon Ghore*, and *Amar Hiyar Majhe* drew visible emotional responses from the audience, many of whom quietly sang along from their seats. The opening session drew a packed audience, with attendees gathering well before the programme began. The applause that followed each performance remained warm, matching the celebratory mood of the evening.

Artists including Jayanto

Chattopadhyay, Mohuya Manjari Sunanda, Azizur Rahman Tuhi, Satyam Debnath, Senjuti Barua, Ria Chakraborty, Ifat Ara Dewan and Priyanka Bhattacharjee took part in the programme, alongside several group performances by Chhayanaut members.

Instrumental accompaniment throughout the evening remained understated, allowing the lyrics and melodies to take centre stage. As the night progressed, the auditorium grew increasingly warm and welcoming, with Tagore's birth anniversary being honoured through heartfelt performances that left listeners absorbed in the familiarity and timelessness of his words and melodies.

The second evening of *Rabindra*

Utsab 1433 continued the celebration with another extensive lineup of Rabindra Sangeet performances by both senior and emerging artistes. Familiar compositions such as *Mor Sondhyay Tumi Shundor Beshe Eshecho*, *Amra Nuton Jouboneri Doot*, *Tomarei Koriachi Jiboner Dhrubotara*, and *Amar Mon Mane Na* resonated through the auditorium, drawing warm responses from the audience throughout the evening. Artistes including Omeed Dev, Protick Endaw, Mezbahul Azam Monzu, Suma Roy, Irin Pervin Onna, Warda Rihab, Sutapa Saha and Mahashweta Chowdhury took part in the programme alongside several ensemble performances by Chhayanaut members.

For decades, Chhayanaut has remained one of the country's most prominent institutions dedicated to preserving Rabindra Sangeet and Bengali cultural traditions. Events such as *Rabindra Utsab* continue to draw audiences across generations, particularly those who grew up attending Chhayanaut seasonal celebrations and Baishakh programmes.

The festival concluded yesterday (May 9) with a collective rendition of the national anthem by Chhayanaut artistes, bringing the two-day celebration to a close. The audience responded with prolonged applause, ending an evening — and a festival — rooted in remembrance, music and shared cultural belonging.



PHOTOS: ABRAR FAIYAZ NILOY

Govt to probe

FROM PAGE 1
against anyone. We want the investigation to reveal why we lost these children, what caused it, where our problems were, and whether there was any negligence on our part. It is to determine the responsibilities of our officials."

Asked about punishment for those responsible, he said, "The investigation is underway. It is a responsibility of the state. Every incident should be investigated. People have the right to know."

The incumbent government is a democratic and accountable government and it is ready to be accountable to the people, he said.

The report will be made public upon completion of the probe, Quamruzzaman said at the event organised by the Bangladesh Health Reporters Forum at Bangladesh Medical University.

The development comes as the country recorded nine more deaths from measles and measles-like symptoms in the 24 hours to 8:00am yesterday, taking the total number of confirmed and suspected measles deaths to 352.

Of the nine, three are confirmed measles deaths while six are suspected cases, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). As of yesterday, total confirmed deaths rose to 61 and suspected deaths to 291.

As the number of measles cases and child deaths continues to rise, health experts are blaming immunisation gaps caused by low vaccination coverage and vaccine shortages for the outbreak.

Many attributed the situation to the interim government's mishandling of the vaccination programme, alleging that its attempt to change the procurement method and funding source caused delays in vaccine procurement, leading to shortages and eventual stockouts.

Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser on health, refuted the allegations, saying the ministry had provided all necessary

approvals and policy support for vaccine procurement on time and in accordance with established procedures.

Several organisations and at least two speakers at yesterday's roundtable have demanded an investigation into the matter and punishment for those responsible.

The health department should develop a nationwide protocol for treating measles patients, as many children were being brought to their hospital after being "severely mismanaged", said Mirza Md Ziaul Islam, head of Paediatric Infectious Diseases at Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute.

"At one stage, they are de-shouldering their responsibility, increasing deaths and putting pressure on us."

If the doctors provide proper treatment at peripheral-level hospitals across the country, the number of patients coming to Dhaka would decrease.

Be-Nazir Ahmed, a public health expert and former director of disease control at the health directorate, termed the situation a pandemic.

"It is a large-scale pandemic that has spread across all districts. It would be easier to control if the government acknowledges it."

He recommended for auditing the measles deaths for future preparation and suggested giving financial assistance to the family of the measles deaths.

Measles-related deaths may continue for another month, said Mushtuq Husain, a public health expert, while urging the government to take immediate steps to minimise the toll.

He suggested establishing community isolation centres for patients in urban slums to help reduce deaths.

Pravath Chandra Biswas, director general of DGHS, said they will carry out a death review if the expert panel recommends.

They also asked the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research carry out investigation into the origin and related issues of the outbreak.



Traders who harvest paddy from the haor region in Kishoreganj are transporting their produce by boat on the Narosunda River. Each boat carries around 1,000-1,500 maunds of paddy and is sent to be sold across the country. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TAFSILUL AZIZ

Values-based

FROM PAGE 3
the media and the judiciary are key pillars of justice, accountability, and balance of power.

"When an ordinary citizen seeks justice in court to protect their rights, the neutrality of the judiciary becomes their greatest source of hope. Similarly, the media amplifies the voices of common people and raises awareness against abuse of power, irregularities, and discrimination," he said.

He said although exposing the truth about powerful groups is often risky, the media must perform this duty as a constitutionally protected democratic institution.

"The biggest challenge to media freedom is its economic structure. Government-dependent financing carries the risk of political influence, while excessive reliance on corporate investment may undermine editorial independence. Therefore, while strong investment is necessary to build a robust media institution, maintaining a balance between editorial freedom and financial sustainability is equally important," he said.

Khulna University Treasurer Prof Dr Md Nurunnabi, who attended the seminar as chief guest, said media is one of the key instruments of democracy, accountability, and truth-telling in a state.

"Independent and responsible journalism plays a vital role in ensuring justice and protecting people's rights. Alongside freedom, maintaining ethics, objectivity, and professionalism in journalism is equally essential," he said.

Speaking as a special guest, Associate Prof Majidul Islam of the university's mass communication and journalism discipline said media freedom is always dependent on context.

He said responsible and objective journalism has become increasingly important in ensuring the flow of accurate information in society.

"Such initiatives are highly commendable in inspiring the younger generation toward truthful and ethical journalism," he added.

The seminar was chaired by Khulna University Journalists' Association President Md Ibrahim Khalil.

Students from different disciplines of the university, alongside journalists, attended the programme.

Lost a piece

FROM PAGE 12
After completing her studies, she could have returned to the country and contributed to national development," he said.

He added that the Bangladesh government would maintain regular communication with US authorities to ensure maximum punishment for those responsible. "We are also standing by Bristy's family in this time of crisis."

When this correspondent visited Bristy's home in the afternoon, relatives and neighbours were waiting to see her one last time and bid farewell.

An emotional scene unfolded as the ambulance carrying her body arrived around 1:30pm. Her father, Jahir Uddin Akon, was helped out of the vehicle while her mother, Ivy Begum, repeatedly fainted. At one point, she broke down, crying: "I have lost a piece of my heart, and I'll never be whole again. Who will I live with now? Please bring my Bristy back."

Speaking to this correspondent, Jahir said the family would spend Eid at their village home to

be with relatives. Recently, they built a house to Bristy's liking, designed by her brother Jahid Akon. She was meant to return in July and cut the ribbon, but that day never came.

"My daughter will now sleep forever beside the house we built for her. How can I bear staying in this house without her?" he lamented.

He added: "My daughter wanted to complete her PhD in chemical engineering and return to Bangladesh to serve the nation. That dream was cut short. Now I have only one demand -- the Bangladesh government must ensure the maximum punishment for her killer."

Speaking to this newspaper, Bristy's cousin Tuli Akter said, "I wanted to go abroad for higher education like Bristy. But now my family no longer wants me to go because they do not want to lose another daughter."

CANAL RE-EXCAVATION

BIP calls for integrated approach

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) has urged the government to treat the ongoing canal re-excitation programme not merely as a dredging exercise, but as a core component of integrated spatial planning, water governance and climate adaptation.

The institute presented its position in a paper titled "Canal Re-excitation Programme: In the Context of Water Management, Climate Adaptation and Spatial Planning" yesterday.

For canal re-excavations to achieve lasting results, it must be linked with land use control, natural drainage preservation, waste management, climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation and long-term maintenance, BIP said.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Keep drains, canals and rivers connected
- » Protect wetlands with conservation zones
- » Stop waste discharge into waterways
- » Use GIS monitoring, dedicated maintenance funds

Citing a 2023 study, the institute warned that continued damage to canals and drainage corridors could nearly double flood-affected areas in parts of Dhaka from 4.05 percent to 8.47 percent by 2042.

BIP said while re-excitation may restore water flow and reduce waterlogging in some areas, without connectivity between drains, canals and rivers, regular desiltation, and pollution control, excavated canals risk becoming clogged again alongside degradation of water quality.

The institute also cited a 2024 study that said Dhaka lost about 69 percent of its wetlands between 1990 and 2020, while land surface temperatures rose by 3.44°C to 9.35°C.

It warned that 74-90 percent of remaining wetlands could disappear by 2050 without protection, and called for wetland conservation zones, ecological buffer strips along canal banks, prohibition of illegal structures and mandatory blue-green network requirements in urban planning rules.

BIP recommended sewage and effluent treatment facilities, solid waste management systems, and strict enforcement against direct discharge into waterways.

It also called for addressing limitations including lack of coordinated national planning, repeated re-encroachment, unclear maintenance funding, weak inter-agency coordination and poor linkage with the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 and the National Adaptation Plan 2023-2050.

Restoring trust

FROM PAGE 3

"However, achieving that goal will become difficult if people do not feel safe and secure both at home and outside. That is why restoring people's trust in the police and improving the law-and-order situation are our priorities at this moment," Tarique added.

He said stable law and order is essential to continue the country's democratic progress.

The prime minister also asked police to play a more effective role in preventing mob violence, juvenile gangs and the spread of drugs.

Police Week 2026 is set to begin today.

Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited

Plot No.: 1088, Block No.: I, Road No.: Sabrina Sobhan 5th Avenue, Bashundhara R/A, Vatara, Dhaka-1229, Phone: +8809606-555555, Fax: +8809606-555550

NOTICE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING (EGM)

An application has been made before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh for approval of the proposed Scheme of Merger of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. (Transferee Company) under Sections 228 and 229 of the Companies Act, 1994.

Notice is hereby given that in accordance with the direction of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh in **Company Matter No. 318 of 2026**, an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the Members of **Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited** will be held on **June 03, 2026 at 10:00 AM (Bangladesh Standard Time)** through Digital Platform for the purpose of considering the following resolution as Special Resolution:

AGENDA FOR SPECIAL RESOLUTION:

Approval of the Scheme of Merger of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. (Transferee Company).

To consider and if thought fit, to pass, with or without modification(s), the following resolution as a Special Resolution:

"RESOLVED THAT the proposed Scheme of Merger (the Scheme) of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. (Transferee Company), as placed before this meeting, be and is hereby approved in its entirety, subject to the sanction of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, under Sections 228 and 229 of the Companies Act, 1994 and compliance with applicable legal and regulatory requirements."

All the members of the Company are requested to make it convenient to attend/participate the meeting accordingly.

Dated: 10 May, 2026

By Order of the Board

Sd/-

Asadullah Mahmud FCS, CGA (UK & Ireland)
Company Secretary

Notes:

- The Notice of the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) for the approval of the Proposed Scheme of Merger which forms an integral part of this Notice, is being dispatched to the Members (as Annexure-A) by registered post. The copies of Proposed Scheme of Merger are kept at the Registered Office of the Company for inspection.
- A Member entitled to attend and vote at the EGM may appoint a proxy to attend and vote on his/her behalf. The duly completed Proxy Form, affixed with a revenue stamp of Tk. 100, must be deposited at the Registered Office of the Company at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled time of the EGM. A scanned copy of the duly stamped Proxy Form may alternatively be sent to cs.wp@waltonbd.com within the same timeframe.
- The EGM Notice, along with the link for joining the meeting through the Digital Platform (audio-visual system) will be sent to the respective Members' e-mail addresses available with the Company.
- The Proposed Scheme of Merger shall also be kept open for inspection at the office of the learned Advocate for the petitioner, Mr. Saqeb Mahub, situated at Room No. 2020 (Annex), Supreme Court Bar Association Building, Supreme Court of Bangladesh, Dhaka-1000, and will be accessible to all concerned during office hours.

Woman, three daughters

FROM PAGE 1
Sharmin's husband, Forkan Miah, has been absconding since the incident.

Her father, Shahadat Molla, filed a case against five people around 7:35pm, naming Forkan as the prime accused. The remaining accused were not named.

Meanwhile, two people have been detained for questioning in connection with the murders, said Gazipur Superintendent of Police Md Sharif Uddin.

Forkan, originally from Meri Gopinathpur village in Gopalganj Sadar upazila, worked as a private car driver and married Sharmin around 20 years ago. The family had been living in a rented house in Rautkona village for nearly a year.

Speaking to reporters, Sharmin's uncle Uzzal said Forkan frequently assaulted his wife. About six months ago, Sharmin returned to her father's home in Gopalganj but was later sent back to her husband.

Uzzal also alleged that Forkan kept demanding money from the family, leading to repeated disputes. Shahin, another relative of Sharmin, said Forkan called his brother, Mishkat, on the night of the incident to tell him he had killed everyone in the house. He then asked Mishkat to let Sharmin's family know.

Mishkat could not be reached over the phone despite repeated attempts.

After being informed early yesterday, Sharmin's

family asked their relatives in Gazipur to check on the house. After finding the bodies, they informed police, who recovered them around 8:00am.

Lutfunnahar, wife of the house owner Monir Hossain, who is an expatriate, said her husband is currently in Singapore. She and her daughter live in a house near Sharmin's. "After receiving the information, I went to the house and saw Sharmin wearing new clothes, tied up and hanging from the window grille, Rasul on a bed, and the three children on the floor -- all dead."

Sharmin's nephew, Sakib Al Hasan Biswas, a student of Bhawal Ideal School and College, said Rasul had recently come to Kapasia after being lured by Forkan with promises of employment.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Asaduzzaman, additional superintendent of police (Kapasia-Kaliganj Circle), said preliminary findings suggest that Forkan killed all five with a sharp weapon. "The incident may have occurred due to a family feud."

Police are investigating whether sedatives or sleeping pills were used before the murders.

Additional District Magistrate Salma Khatun described the incident as deeply heartbreaking and said those responsible would be brought to justice after a thorough investigation.

Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC.

Plot No.: 1088, Block No.: I, Road No.: Sabrina Sobhan 5th Avenue, Bashundhara R/A, Vatara, Dhaka-1229, Phone: +8809606-555555, Fax: +8809606-555550
Email: cswhil@waltonplc.com, Website: www.waltonplc.com

NOTICE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING (EGM)

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Notice is hereby given that in accordance with the direction of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh in **Company Matter No. 318 of 2026**, an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the Members of **Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC.** will be held on **June 03, 2026 at 11:00 AM (Bangladesh Standard Time)** by using "Digital Platform" (Link: <https://walton-egm.bdvirtual.com>) as per the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission Order No. BSEC/ACAD/SRC/2024/318/87; dated: 27 March 2024 for the purpose of considering the following resolution as Special Resolution:

AGENDA FOR SPECIAL RESOLUTION

Approval of the Scheme of Merger of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. (Transferee Company).

To consider and if thought fit, to pass, with or without modification(s), the following resolution as a Special Resolution:

"RESOLVED THAT the proposed Scheme of Merger (the Scheme) of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. (Transferee Company), as placed before this meeting, be and is hereby approved in its entirety, subject to the sanction of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, under Sections 228 and 229 of the Companies Act, 1994 and compliance with applicable legal and regulatory requirements."

All the members of the Company are requested to make it convenient to attend/participate the meeting accordingly.

By Order of the Board

Sd/-

Md. Rafiqul Islam, FCS
Company Secretary

Dated: May 10, 2026

Notes:

- The Notice of the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) for the approval of the Proposed Scheme of Merger which forms an integral part of this Notice, is being dispatched to the Members (as Annexure-A) by registered post and via their respective email addresses as available with us as of the Record Date. The Proposed Scheme of Merger has also been made available on the Company's website at www.waltonplc.com, and copies thereof are kept at the Registered Office of the Company for inspection.
- The Record Date was fixed on **04 May 2026**. Members whose names appear in the Depository Register on the said Record Date shall be eligible to attend/participate and vote in the EGM through the Digital Platform.
- A Member entitled to attend and vote at the EGM may appoint a proxy to attend and vote on his/her behalf. The duly completed Proxy Form, affixed with a revenue stamp of Tk. 100, must be deposited at the Registered Office of the Company at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled time of the EGM. A scanned copy of the duly stamped Proxy Form may alternatively be sent to cswhil@waltonplc.com within the same timeframe.
- The EGM Notice, along with the link for joining the meeting through the Digital Platform (audio-visual system) and detailed login instructions, will be sent to the respective Members' e-mail addresses available with the Company.
- Detailed procedures for login and participation in the Digital Platform meeting will also be available on the Company's website at www.waltonplc.com.**
- The Members will be able to submit their questions/comments and vote electronically before 48 hours of the commencement of the EGM and during the EGM.
- The Proposed Scheme of Merger shall also be kept open for inspection at the office of the learned Advocate for the petitioner, Mr. Saqeb Mahub, situated at Room No. 2020 (Annex), Supreme Court Bar Association Building, Supreme Court of Bangladesh, Dhaka-1000, and will be accessible to all concerned during office hours.





Can hospitals trust AI with numbers?

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Hospitals around the world are racing to bring artificial intelligence into everyday care, but a new study suggests the technology may still stumble over some surprisingly basic tasks. Researchers in the United States tested nine popular AI language models on simple hospital record questions, such as counting patients or sorting information from emergency department visits. The results were far from reassuring.

Using records from 50,000 real emergency visits, scientists found that most AI systems struggled when asked direct questions in plain language. Even some of the best-known models produced inaccurate answers once the amount of data increased. One leading system saw its accuracy fall sharply when handling larger tables, raising concerns about relying on AI alone for hospital planning and patient management.

The picture improved when the models were paired with tools that allowed them to generate and run computer code. Under those conditions, a few systems delivered almost flawless results. Researchers say the findings show that AI still needs strong human oversight and technical support before it can safely handle critical hospital administration tasks independently.

The researchers warned that speed and convenience should never replace accuracy, especially in healthcare settings where small mistakes can quickly create larger problems overnight.

THALASSAEMIA

A silent disorder, a national concern

DR SUROJIT KUMAR SARKAR (TITAS)

A silent crisis is spreading across Bangladesh, hidden inside families and passed quietly from one generation to another. Thalassaemia, a lifelong blood disorder, is now emerging as a growing social emergency, affecting thousands of families who often have little idea they are carrying the condition until a child becomes seriously ill.

Observed every year on May 8, World Thalassaemia Day serves as a global reminder of the growing burden of inherited blood disorders and the urgent need for awareness, prevention, and accessible treatment. In countries like Bangladesh, where a significant number of people unknowingly carry thalassaemia genes, the day highlights the importance of premarital screening, early diagnosis, and public education. This year's observance comes at a time when experts are increasingly warning that thalassaemia is evolving from a neglected medical condition into a major social and public health challenge.

Health experts believe nearly 10 to 15 percent of Bangladeshis may unknowingly carry some form of the disorder. In certain northern communities, the rate is believed to be even higher. Yet awareness remains alarmingly low. Many couples begin married life without ever hearing the word thalassaemia, only to face devastating news months after the birth of their child.

The warning signs often appear when a baby is around six months old. Parents notice weakness, unusual paleness, yellowish eyes, or repeated illness. Soon, regular blood transfusions become part of life. For many families, it arrives like a storm

without warning.

Thalassaemia is inherited from parents. A person may carry the condition without showing any symptoms, which is why it often remains undetected for years. When both parents carry the disorder, there is a higher chance their child may develop a severe form requiring lifelong treatment. In Bangladesh, one of the most common forms is linked to a blood variation known as Hb E, which is especially widespread in some regions.



Doctors say simple blood tests can help identify carriers before marriage or pregnancy. However, screening is still not common practice in the country. As a result, many families discover the disease only after their child becomes dependent on regular treatment.

Managing thalassaemia is emotionally and financially exhausting. Children often need monthly transfusions to survive, along with medicines to prevent

harmful iron build-up in the body. Without proper care, complications can affect growth, bones, hormones, and overall health. While advanced treatments exist abroad, they remain beyond the reach of most Bangladeshi families.

The financial burden can also be crushing. Even in lower-cost settings, treatment may cost families around Tk 10,000 every month. For lower and middle-income households already struggling with rising expenses, the pressure can become unbearable.

Specialists warn that Bangladesh can no longer afford to overlook the problem. They are calling for nationwide awareness campaigns, accessible screening programmes, and better treatment facilities at district and upazila levels. Many also believe thalassaemia testing should become routine before marriage and family planning.

Despite the challenges, there is hope. Newer medicines are helping some patients reduce their dependence on transfusions, offering families a glimpse of a more stable future. Experts say the fight against thalassaemia now depends not only on doctors, but also on awareness, early testing, and collective social action before the crisis grows even deeper.

For many parents, the greatest pain is knowing the illness could have been prevented through awareness and timely screening. Public health experts say Bangladesh still has an opportunity to slow the crisis before it spirals further. But that window may not remain open for long. The message is becoming increasingly urgent: awareness today can save countless families tomorrow.

The writer is an Associate Professor of Haematology at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College. E-mail: dtsurojit@yahoo.com

Bangladesh's youth are exhausted! Are they ready for a change?

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Bangladesh's university students are quietly carrying a heavy burden, and a new youth wellness survey has brought their struggles into sharp focus. Conducted among 1,500 students across ten universities in Dhaka during the Third National Youth Wellness Festival 2026, the findings reveal a generation running low on sleep, energy, and emotional support.

Nearly two in three students said they feel stressed almost every day, while more than half sleep six hours or less each night. Many blamed demanding university schedules for their exhaustion, with long study hours and constant pressure leaving them mentally drained even without physical work.

The reasons behind this stress stretch beyond classrooms. Students pointed to financial worries, family expectations, uncertainty about careers, social media comparisons, and relationship struggles as daily pressures shaping their lives.

Yet amid the fatigue, there are signs of hope. Activities such as yoga, breathing sessions, dance, art, and meditation drew strong interest at the festival, with many students saying they now want to prioritise their wellbeing. The findings send a clear message: Bangladesh's youth are exhausted, but they are also ready for change. Experts say universities, families, and communities must work together to create safer, kinder, and healthier spaces for students.



HANTAVIRUS

When ordinary dust turns dangerous

A silent danger carried by rats and mice is once again drawing global attention. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recently warned about hantavirus, a rare but serious illness that spreads mainly through contact with infected rodents and their waste. Though uncommon, the disease can turn severe very quickly, making awareness and prevention more important than ever.

People usually become infected when they breathe in tiny particles from rodent urine, droppings, or saliva that have mixed with dust in closed or poorly cleaned spaces. Risk can increase while sweeping storerooms, cleaning abandoned buildings, handling grain, or staying in areas with heavy rodent activity. In rare situations, some strains of the virus may also spread through very close human contact.

The illness often begins quietly, looking much like a seasonal fever. Early signs include fever, tiredness, body pain, headache, chills, and stomach problems such as nausea, vomiting, or diarrhoea. Some people may also complain of dizziness and weakness. However, symptoms can worsen rapidly within a few days. Breathing may become difficult, the chest may feel tight, and patients can suddenly become critically ill. Health experts warn that delayed treatment can become life-threatening.

As there is no widely available cure or vaccine, prevention remains the strongest shield. WHO advises people to keep homes, workplaces, and storage areas clean and free from rodents. Food should always be stored safely, and small openings around doors or walls should be sealed to stop rats and mice from entering. While cleaning rodent-infested places, dry sweeping should be avoided because it can spread contaminated dust into the air. Instead, affected areas should first be dampened and cleaned carefully while maintaining good hand hygiene.

Public health experts also stress the importance of early medical attention if flu-like symptoms appear after possible exposure to rodents. Quick diagnosis and supportive care can improve survival. Though the overall public risk remains low, the recent concerns surrounding hantavirus serve as a reminder that even small household pests can sometimes carry deadly consequences.

With changing weather, crowded living conditions, and poor waste management in many parts of the world, experts fear rodent-related illnesses could become harder to control. Simple habits such as disposing of garbage properly, avoiding contact with wild rodents, and using protective gloves during cleaning can greatly reduce risk. Health agencies are also encouraging stronger community awareness so that people recognise symptoms early and seek medical help before the illness turns severe.

Source: World Health Organisation

Small acts of love may heal the heart

Love may not always arrive through grand speeches or dramatic gestures. Sometimes, it hides in a warm cup of tea, a thoughtful message, or a simple "have you eaten?" According to a new study from Pennsylvania State University, people who express love in small, everyday ways may actually feel more loved themselves.

Researchers followed 52 adults for four weeks, asking them several times a day about moments when they showed love or felt cared for.



The findings revealed an interesting pattern: those who expressed love more often later reported stronger feelings of being loved. However, people who merely received love were not always more likely to return it.

The study also found that people who regularly felt loved were more likely to describe themselves as happy, fulfilled, and emotionally balanced. Researchers believe these daily exchanges create stronger emotional connections and improve overall wellbeing.

The message is simple yet powerful: love grows when it is shared. Small acts of kindness, affection, and care may not only brighten someone else's day, but quietly transform our own lives too. In a fast-moving world filled with stress and distance, researchers say expressing affection daily could become an easy habit for healthier relationships and families.

BORN INTO BURDEN: The rising cost of Thalassaemia in Bangladesh

PROF WAQAR A KHAN

A quiet crisis often begins with celebration. In many Bangladeshi homes, the arrival of a child is welcomed with prayers, sweets, and endless dreams for the future. Yet for some families, that joy slowly turns into fear when an invisible illness begins to reveal itself.

Shailla and Rahim were no different. Their families celebrated when they learned they were expecting their first child. Every medical visit brought reassurance, and nothing seemed unusual throughout the pregnancy. When their daughter Ayesha was born, she appeared perfectly healthy. Her smile brightened the home and filled the family with hope.

But within months, worry quietly entered their lives. Ayesha looked pale, became tired easily, and was less playful than other children her age. Doctors advised further blood tests, and the results shattered the family's happiness. Their daughter had thalassaemia, a lifelong condition that would require regular blood transfusions and constant care.

Like many parents, Shailla and Rahim had never heard of the disease before. They could not understand how two healthy parents could have a child with such a serious illness. Doctors later explained that parents may unknowingly carry the gene without showing any symptoms

themselves. When both parents are carriers, there is a chance their child may be born with the condition.

Health experts say this painful story is repeated in countless households across Bangladesh every year. According to specialists working in the field for decades, many parents only discover the disease after their



child becomes seriously unwell. By then, families often face emotional heartbreak, financial strain, and years of hospital visits.

What makes the situation even more tragic is that thalassaemia can often be prevented. A simple blood test before marriage or during early pregnancy can identify whether someone is a carrier. Special tests during pregnancy can also help families make informed decisions early on. However, such services remain limited in Bangladesh, with advanced testing available in only a few centres in Dhaka.

Doctors and researchers say awareness remains one of the

country's biggest challenges. Many families avoid discussing the illness openly because of fear, stigma, or lack of understanding. Yet silence does little to protect future generations.

For one senior physician who has worked with thalassaemia patients since 2000, the memories remain deeply personal. He recalls the shocked faces of parents struggling to accept the diagnosis and remembers many children who later lost their lives. Those experiences inspired him to establish specialised testing facilities despite enormous financial barriers.

Experts now believe Bangladesh urgently needs a stronger national prevention programme focused on public awareness, carrier screening, and wider access to testing services. They say thousands of children could be spared years of suffering through early action and education.

The story of Ayesha is not simply one family's tragedy. It is also a reminder that awareness, honesty, and timely testing can protect countless children from a preventable future.

For families across the country, the greatest hope now lies not only in treatment, but in knowledge shared before another joyful beginning turns into heartbreak.

The writer is the former President of Dhaka Shishu Hospital Thalassaemia Centre. E-mail: waqarkind@gmail.com

বিদ্যুৎ খালসেমিয়া
দিবস ২০২৬

খ্যালাসেমিয়া

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

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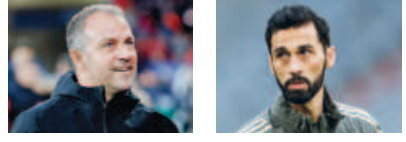
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BEACON
Light for Life

Barca eye title party in Clasico

STAR SPORTS DESK

Barcelona can capitalise on Real Madrid's turmoil by clinching a second consecutive LaLiga title at home on Sunday. Real, trailing Barca by 11 points, are reeling from a dressing-room brawl between Federico Valverde and Aurelien Tchouameni, with the season slipping away and another trophyless campaign looming.



➤ Hansi Flick's Barcelona need just a draw in the Clasico to secure their 29th LaLiga title.

➤ A win in the remaining four games could see Barca reach 100 points, equalling the all-time league record set by Jose Mourinho's Real Madrid in 2011-12.

➤ Winning the remaining matches would see Barca break the single-season record of 32 wins, held jointly by Mourinho (2011-12) and Barca's Tito Vilanova (2012-13).

➤ Barca could become the first team in a 38-game LaLiga season to win all home matches if they beat Real Madrid and Real Betis in the coming weeks.

➤ Historically, the title has been decided in the Clasico only once -- in 1931-32, when Real Madrid drew 2-2 with Barcelona to win their first of 36 league titles by edging out Athletic Bilbao.

➤ Real will miss Valverde (injured in the brawl) and Kylian Mbappe (injury), while Tchouameni is available. Barcelona will be without Lamine Yamal due to injury.

COST OF PACE WITHOUT PRECISION

SPORTS REPORTER

Nahid Rana's opening delivery of the first Test was a bouncer, not express pace but still clocked at 140.9 kph. Pakistan debutant Azan Awaiz was late on the pull, very late in fact, as the ball thudded into the front of his helmet. It sparked excitement on a green Mirpur surface where Bangladesh's pacers believed they held the advantage in pace. Yet an inability to bowl consistently in the right areas allowed Pakistan to cruise to 179 for one in 46 overs at stumps on day two yesterday.

It was not only Rana, introduced as first change, who generated early excitement. Taskin Ahmed extracted an outside edge in his opening over, though the chance fell short of third slip. But Taskin, usually so consistent with his lengths, was spraying it around and not holding a line, with the corridor of uncertainty largely absent.

Ebadot Hossain also forced an edge that saw Mahmudul Hasan produce an acrobatic effort, but the chance went begging. Like the others, Ebadot leaked boundary balls as Bangladesh's pace attack looked deflated towards the close of play.

Bangladesh senior assistant coach Mohammad Salahuddin concurred that the green surface got the pacers "focus on pace a bit too much" instead of "bowling in the right areas".

"Mentally, when any fast bowler sees grass on the wicket, there's always excitement. When there's movement and the ball is carrying quickly, bowlers start thinking they can beat batters with pace," Salahuddin said.

Earlier in the morning, Bangladesh failed to capitalise with the bat after resuming on 301 for four, eventually folding for 413. Pakistan, meanwhile, ended the day in a commanding position thanks to Azan's unbeaten 85 and fellow debutant Abdullah Fazal's 37.

"Pakistan actually bowled very well in



SCORES IN BRIEF



BANGLADESH VS PAKISTAN

1st Test, Day 2

Bangladesh 1st innings: 413 all out in 117.1 overs (Shanto 101, Mominul 91, Mushfiqur 71; Abbas 5-92)

Pakistan 1st innings: 179 for one in 46 overs (Azan Awaiz 85 not out, Imam-ul-Haq 45, Abdullah Fazal 37 not out; Miraz 1-37)

the morning. It was very difficult for us to build partnerships," Salahuddin said. "I think we bowled a bit erratically today, but since this is Test cricket, there's always a chance to come back," he added.

Bangladesh's bowling figures reflected the inconsistency. Taskin and Rana conceded at economy rates of 5 and 5.2 respectively, while Ebadot went at 4.75. Pakistan opener Imam-ul-Haq, who scored a brisk 45, felt that boundary balls played into their hands.

"We were lucky that we were getting boundaries every one or two overs and it was good for the debutants that they didn't feel the pressure of runs drying up," Imam

said in the post-day press conference.

Pakistan pacer Muhammad Abbas, meanwhile, completed a five-wicket haul after a tireless effort on day one, thriving through game awareness and relentless accuracy -- qualities Bangladesh quicks struggled to replicate.

"The strength of Abbas is that he does not give you anything," Imam said. "When we play county cricket, it is difficult to face him, especially on a green track where he always asks you questions again and again and hits the right areas."

That discipline, more than raw pace, ultimately marked the difference between the two attacks over the course of the day.



Cyclists ride through the athletics track of the National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday during women's 2000m team pursuit event on the final day of the 45th National Cycling Competition. Army dominated the competition and finished champions with 12 gold medals, followed by BGB with six, Bangladesh Ansar with one and Gazipur District Sports Association with one gold medal. A total of 225 cyclists from 18 districts and four services teams participated in the three-day competition.

PHOTO: BANGLADESH CYCLING FEDERATION

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এগিয়ে যাওয়ার প্রত্যয়

বিগত ২৫ বছরে শাহজালাল ইসলামী ব্যাংক পিএলসি গড়ে তুলেছে বিশ্বাস, স্বচ্ছতা ও শরীয়াহসম্মত ব্যাংকিংয়ের এক অনন্য দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি। গ্রাহকদের আস্থা ও নিরবচ্ছিন্ন সেবার মাধ্যমে আমরা এগিয়ে চলেছি প্রতিটি পদক্ষেপে।

আজকের এই রজতজয়ন্তী শুধু একটি মাইলফলক নয়-এটি আমাদের অগ্রীকারকে আরও দৃঢ় করার প্রেরণা। আধুনিক প্রযুক্তি, উদ্ভাবনী সেবা এবং নৈতিকতার ভিত্তিতে আগামীর ব্যাংকিং হোক আরও সহজ, নিরাপদ ও সমৃদ্ধ।

আপনাদের আস্থাই আমাদের শক্তি

শাহজালাল ইসলামী ব্যাংক পিএলসি
আন্তর্জাতিক সেবার প্রতিশ্রুতি



Iran casts doubt on US peace efforts

CIA analysis suggests Iran can withstand US blockade for months

AGENCIES

Iran questioned the seriousness of American diplomacy yesterday in the wake of renewed naval clashes in the Gulf, while keeping Washington waiting for a response to its latest negotiating position.

US President Donald Trump had said on Friday that he was expecting Iran's response to Washington's latest proposal for a deal to extend a fragile truce and launch peace talks – "supposedly tonight".

But if Iran did send Pakistani mediators a response, there was no public sign of it, and Tehran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called into question the reliability of the US leadership in a call with his Turkish counterpart.

"The recent escalation of tensions by American forces in the Persian Gulf and their numerous actions in violating the ceasefire have added

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



A farmer tends vegetable seedlings grown on floating beds, locally known as dhap, in a low-lying waterbody in Barishal's Banaripara upazila yesterday. Practised from Boishakh to Ashwin, this centuries-old eco-friendly method allows farmers to raise seedlings of bitter gourd, beans, papaya, bottle gourd, pumpkin, chilli, aubergine and other vegetables on rafts made of water hyacinth and organic matter.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Press freedom needs stronger protection

Say speakers at Star 35th anniversary event in Khulna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

The Daily Star celebrated its 35th anniversary in Khulna yesterday, with speakers calling for the protection of media freedom and prioritisation of national interests over partisan politics.

At the event, held at Khulna Press Club's Liaquat Ali Auditorium, speakers also condemned the attack on The Daily Star office in Dhaka on December 18 last year.

Azizul Bari Helal, ruling BNP lawmaker from Khulna-4, called for respect for press freedom, stressing that individuals should not be targeted for drawing and publishing political cartoons.

He said The Daily Star had practised journalism "keeping its head high" and should continue to do so.

"The BNP believes in the freedom of press. We condemn the attack on The Daily Star and Prothom Alo. If the media creates a narrative, you can create a counter-narrative. Why would you attack a newspaper's office?" he said.

Sk Zahangir Hossain, Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker from Khulna-2, emphasised the necessity of factual reporting, noting that the public always seeks objective news.

Prof Anwarul Kadir, director of forest conservation organisation the Sundarbans Academy, said those who

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Interim govt curbed freedoms

In its latest annual report, Amnesty cites arbitrary arrests, harassment of critics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In 2025, freedom of expression, association, and assembly remained unnecessarily restricted under the interim government, London-based Amnesty International said in its annual report.

The rights organisation also noted that individuals, including human rights defenders, faced arbitrary arrests and harassment for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

"The interim government's ban on the Awami League political party brought into question their commitment to upholding freedom of association," Amnesty said in its annual report, titled, "The State of the World's Human Rights" covering 2025, published on April 21.

The interim government took office in August 2024 following the ousting of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League administration. After the February 12 polls, a BNP-led government assumed power.

Incidents of harassment, violence, and arrests targeting individuals exercising their right to freedom of expression – including human rights defenders, journalists, authors, bloggers, and poets – continued throughout 2025, the report said.

The Cyber Security Act of 2023, a law used by the former government against critics in ways that contravened the right to freedom of expression, continued to be used by the interim government to deter activism.

The Act was later repealed and replaced by the Cyber Security Ordinance, which took effect in May and was intended to remain in force until formal approval by a future parliament.

In August, the High Court dismissed a case filed in 2018 under the Information and Communication Technology Act against activist photographer Shahidul Alam.

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BANGLADESH JOURNALISM CONFERENCE 2026

Owners' business interests often hurt editorial freedom

Speakers say, call for greater transparency and self-regulation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The business interests of media owners pose one of the greatest threats to editorial independence in Bangladesh, speakers said at a conference yesterday.

AK Azad, managing director of Times Media Limited, a concern of Ha-Meem Group, which owns Channel 24 and The Daily Samakal, said that, as an owner, his businesses are always under pressure from the factions his journalists write against.

He made the remarks at the Bangladesh Journalism Conference 2026, organised by Management and Resources Development Initiative, at the Radisson Blu Water Garden in Dhaka.

Azad acknowledged his obligation to the 75,000 workers employed across his non-media businesses and admitted that he is sometimes compelled to

obstruct publication to protect them.

He spoke about how his commitment to independent journalism and his journalist employees is sometimes tested by his responsibility to employees in his other business concerns.

Responding to a proposal made by Kamal Ahmed, who was the chief of the now-defunct media reform commission, to convert media organisations into trusts or public limited companies to separate them from owners' other businesses, Azad said, "I want to turn either Samakal or Channel 24 into a trust, provided people like you [the panellists] take responsibility," he told a panel discussion titled "Media Self Regulation in Bangladesh: Professional Oversight, Accountability and Grievance Redressal."

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"It [self-regulation in media] is something journalists should do [not the state]... It is based on moral authority, not legal authority."

JOAN BARATA
International media law expert

MOTHER'S DAY

Mothers in chars find hope close to home



BRAC-run centre reduces maternal deaths in isolated parts of Sirajganj

TANGILA TASNIM

Just a week ago, 20-year-old Murshida Akter gave birth to a baby boy at a small health centre in a remote char area of Chowhali Upazila, where childbirth often comes with as much fear as joy.

"We have suffered like this for years. Women in these areas often give birth on boats or roadside vehicles while seeking treatment.

For years, childbirth in the remote char villages [meant] a desperate race against time – across rivers, on horse carts, or balanced on the back of motorcycles. Many mothers never made it to a hospital alive.

With no caesarean facilities within reach, women facing complications had to travel long distances across rivers and rough roads to reach hospitals – journeys many did not survive in time.

Now, a BRAC-run health centre is offering rare maternal care in the isolated area, where access to doctors and emergency services has long remained scarce.

Taherima Kharun, a midwife at the BRAC health centre, said, "At home deliveries, we have seen both mothers and babies die."

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'Lost a piece of my heart'

Cries Bristy's mother as her body comes home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

The body of Nahida Sultana Bristy, the Bangladeshi PhD student brutally murdered in Florida last month, was laid to rest at her village home in Madaripur Sadar upazila yesterday.

After her namaz-e-jaanaza following Asr prayers, she was buried beside her grandparents in Char Gobindopur under Khoajpur union.

Earlier in the morning, Bristy's parents and relatives received her body upon its arrival at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka.

Bristy lived with her parents and elder brother in Mirpur before moving to the United States to pursue a PhD in chemical engineering at the University of South Florida last year. She and fellow Bangladeshi PhD student Zamil Ahamed Limon were reported missing on April 16.

Investigators later confirmed both had been murdered. Their bodies were subsequently recovered, and Limon's roommate was arrested and charged with double murder. Limon's body arrived in Dhaka on May 4.

Before Bristy's funeral prayers, Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Wadia Shabab told journalists Bangladesh had suffered an unimaginable loss. "Bristy was a PhD research

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5



PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Ivy Begum, mother of slain PhD student Nahida Sultana Bristy, breaks down in tears as she leans on her son, Jahid Akon, after receiving Bristy's body yesterday. A student of University of South Florida, Bristy was murdered in the United States. The photo was taken near HSA.

I held over torture and abetment to teen's suicide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Police on Friday arrested one person over the torture and abetment to the suicide of a teenager in Pabna's Chatmohar upazila.

Earlier that evening, police recovered the girl's body from her residence.

According to the victim's family, the 14-year-old was assaulted and humiliated by her employer over allegations of theft earlier that day.

The child used to work as a domestic helper at the home of one Hannan Mollah, who lived in the same village as the girl's family.

On Friday morning, Tk 120 went missing from Mollah's house. The family blamed the child and tied her to a pillar and beat her in front of locals, many of whom recorded the incident.

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