



Tk 33,474cr Padma barrage set for govt nod

Project to alleviate water crisis in 26 southwestern districts

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is set to implement the much anticipated Padma barrage project at an initial cost of Tk 33,474 crore, aimed at reviving five major river systems and storing 2,900 million cubic metres of water in the Padma river.

The project, to be executed in two phases by 2033, will require a total investment of nearly Tk 50,443 crore.

Covering about 37 percent of Bangladesh's land area, spanning 26 districts and 163 upazilas across four divisions, the Padma-dependent region has long suffered from water shortages due to upstream diversions.

The barrage is expected to be a game-changer for agriculture, fisheries, biodiversity, and economic growth.

- 2,900 million cubic metres of water can be stored in the Padma
- Five river systems will be revived
- Irrigation for 2.88 million hectares will be ensured
- Annual production of rice to be boosted by 2.39 million tonnes
- Fish production will likely improve by 2.34 million tonnes

The project gained momentum after a meeting on May 6 with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, where he highlighted the project's potential impact on GDP and gave directives for its implementation.

The feedback was incorporated and the proposal for the first phase is set to be placed before the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council on Wednesday for approval.

The first phase would be paid from the government's own funds and it includes the construction of the 2.1km-long Padma barrage at Pangsha in Rajbari district.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

Shabnur Begum rushes two of her seven-month-old triplets to DNCC Dedicated Covid-19 Hospital in Mohakhali yesterday after all three contracted measles. Shabnur, from Cumilla's Debidwar upazila, was finally able to admit her two boys, who were in critical condition, to the ICU, while the girl was admitted to a general ward.

Measles death toll now 409 after revision

11 more children die

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of deaths from measles and measles-like symptoms saw a sharp rise yesterday as health authorities adjusted previously unrecorded deaths, taking the total number of confirmed and suspected measles deaths to 409.

A total of 11 confirmed and suspected measles deaths were recorded in the 24

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Care gaps push patients to crowd Dhaka hospitals

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Nine-month-old Tariqul from Narsingdi was rushed to a local health facility last Thursday after developing fever and other measles-like symptoms. The baby was later transferred to Narsingdi District Sadar Hospital.

On Saturday night, he was moved again, this time to Dhaka, following doctors' advice.

Yesterday, the baby was asleep on a mattress close to the staircase outside the Infectious Diseases Hospital's third floor ward.

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'Won't stand extrajudicial activities'

PM tells police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday asked the police administration to remain neutral and operate strictly as per the law so that police stations can be trusted by people as reliable support centres in times of need.



"My message is clear: the police administration does not belong to any political party, and it must be run in accordance with the law. It's your responsibility to ensure that no innocent person becomes a victim of harassment," he said.

Tarique made the remarks while addressing the "Welfare Parade" organised as part of Police Week-2026 at the Bangladesh Police Auditorium in the Rajarbagh Police Lines. The PM also inaugurated Police Week-2026, first during his tenure, reports UNB.

Police members placed various demands before the prime minister, including a separate pay scale, overtime allowances equivalent to 50 percent of basic salary, and honorary promotions for personnel from constable to inspector ranks upon retirement.

Speaking at the event, Tarique said the relationship between police personnel and the public must be legal and humane, based on trust and confidence.

"In case of trouble or crisis, people should be able to consider police stations as their reliable place of shelter, this is what I expect from you."

He stressed the need to make police stations more accessible and people-friendly, so that people can lodge complaints without fear and receive remedies.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Traditional sampan boats race across the Karnaphuli river in Chattogram yesterday. People gathered along the riverbanks to witness the 20th "Sampan Race and Chattgaiya Culture Fair". Many were seen cheering their teams on.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

SC upholds Ivy's bail in 10 cases

No bar on release, lawyer says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday upheld the High Court bail of former Narayanganj City Corporation mayor Selina Hayat Ivy in 10 cases.

The apex court dismissed five petitions filed by the state challenging the HC verdicts that on November 9 last year granted bail to Ivy in five cases and vacated its chamber judge's orders that stayed her HC bail in other five cases.

This means that Ivy's HC bail in total 10 cases will remain effective, Deputy Attorney General Fatima Akhter and Ivy's lawyers Md Motaher Hossain Sazu

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Tehran sends US truce response to Islamabad

Vows retaliation against new strikes; drones hit several Gulf region targets

UAE, Kuwait air defences deal with drones coming from Iran

Iran war 'not over,' uranium must be removed: Netanyahu

ARAMCO warns 1 billion barrels lost, it will slow oil market recovery

AGENCIES

Iran responded to Washington's latest peace proposal yesterday, after drones threatened several Gulf region targets and Tehran warned it would not hold back from retaliating against any new US strikes.

According to state broadcaster IRIB, Tehran's response, passed to Pakistani mediators, focuses on ending the war "on all fronts, especially Lebanon" -- where Israel has kept up its fight with Iran-backed Hezbollah -- as well as on "ensuring shipping security".

Pakistan has received Iran's response to the United States' proposal on the war and the response has been sent to the US, a Pakistani government official involved in the talks said.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in an interview yesterday that Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium must be "taken out" before the US-Israeli war against Iran can be considered over. "It's not over, because there's still nuclear material -- enriched uranium -- that has to be taken out of Iran," he said.

US President Donald Trump has said it would only take two weeks to hit "every single target" in Iran, adding that the Islamic republic was "militarily defeated."

Trump was expecting Iran's reply by Friday, but as the wait dragged on, the ceasefire in the Gulf came under increasing strain, including from yesterday's drone strikes, one of which

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

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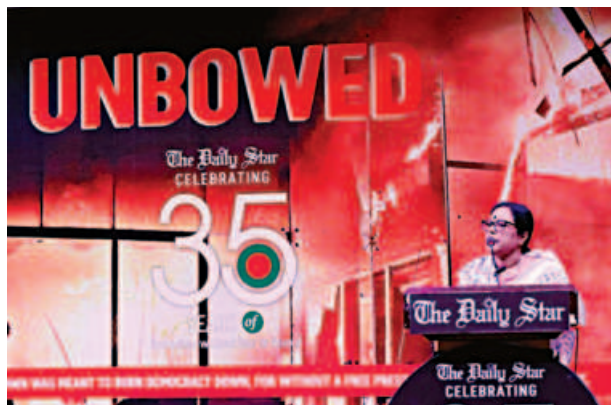
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Politicians, academics, civil society members and others joined The Daily Star in celebrating its 35th anniversary in Barishal yesterday. Held at the Zilla Shilpakala Academy auditorium, the event featured a documentary and photo exhibition on the December 18, 2025 mob attack on the newspaper's Dhaka office. Similar programmes will next be held in Rajshahi, Sylhet, Rangpur and Mymensingh.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Expat shot dead in South Africa: family

Victim's body may reach Bangladesh on Tuesday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi businessman was shot dead by unidentified assailants in South Africa on Saturday afternoon, according to the victim's family.



Sumon Miah

The deceased, Sumon Miah, 34, was originally from Abhirampur Pashchim Para in Tangail's Mirzapur upazila, said Abdullah Al Mamun, officer-in-charge of Mirzapur Police Station.

According to the family, Sumon went to South Africa 14 years ago and had been doing business near Newcastle city.

Around 1:00pm on Saturday local time (5:00pm BST), unidentified assailants stopped his car and shot him dead. Police later recovered his body.

Speaking to reporters, Sumon's father said people known to him in South Africa immediately informed the family about the incident over the phone.

Sumon's body may reach Bangladesh on Tuesday, he said. The youngest of seven siblings, Sumon married three years ago and had a two-year-old son, his family said.

Over the past decade, hundreds of Bangladeshis have been murdered in South Africa over business and personal disputes.

Tk 33,474cr Padma barrage set for govt nod

FROM PAGE 1
The barrage will feature 78 spillways, 18 underslucic gates, two fish passes, a navigation lock, guide bunds, and approach embankments.

Hydropower plants will be set up at Padma barrage and Gorai off take, which is the crucial entry point of the Gorai-Madhumati river. The plants will generate 113 megawatts of electricity.

The first phase also includes the dredging and re-excavation of the 135.6km Gorai-Madhumati river and 246.46km Hisna river systems.

The other works include Gorai off take with 15 spillways, fish pass, navigation lock, and hydro-power plant (36.6 megawatt); Chandana off take (four spillways); Hisna off take (five spillways); and construction 180km alluvial bund.

The Hisna off take, often referred to in conjunction with the Hisna-Mathabhabanga river system in Bangladesh, is a critical component in water management designed to restore flow from the Ganges river system.

The off take is part of wider efforts to combat silting and ensure water supply during the lean season, acting as a crucial channel for diverting water into regional rivers like the Hisna.

However, activities under the first phase will directly benefit 19 districts and 120 upazilas in four divisions: Khulna (Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenaidah, Magura, Jashore, Narail, Bagerhat, Khulna, Satkhira), Dhaka (Rajbari, Faridpur, Gopalganj), Rajshahi (Pabna, Rajshahi, Natore, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj) and Barishal (Barishal, Pirojpur).

The second phase includes construction of additional supportive infrastructure and restoration of Chandana Barasia, Baral and Ichhamati river systems.

Five river systems — Hisna-Mathabhabanga, Gorai-Madhumati, Chandana Barasia, Baral and Ichhamati — would be revived.

The revived river flows will reduce salinity intrusion in the southwest, restore biodiversity in the Sundarbans,

and improve drainage and irrigation.

It would ensure water supply to the Ganges-Kobadak (GK) Irrigation Project, the North Rajshahi irrigation project, Godagari pump house, and Rooppur nuclear power plant.

The project would ensure irrigation for 2.88 million hectares of net cultivable land and boost the annual production of rice by 2.39 million tonnes and fish by 2.34 million tonnes.

The idea of a barrage on the Padma dates back decades.

Between 1960 and 2000, four studies were conducted to identify suitable sites. In 2005, a detailed feasibility study was launched, completed in 2013 by a consortium of local and foreign consultants.

The study highlighted dry-season water scarcity due to upstream withdrawals at India's Farakka Barrage, which has severely reduced flows in Bangladesh, drying up river systems and damaging agriculture, fisheries, navigation, and biodiversity.

SC upholds Ivy's bail in 10 cases

FROM PAGE 1
The PM said the government wants to ensure the rule of law while upholding human rights, noting that enforced disappearances, abductions or extrajudicial activities are unacceptable under any circumstances.

There is no legal bar to Ivy's release from jail following the SC orders, Motaheb said.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division led by Chief Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury delivered the orders.

The Appellate Division also asked the HC to dispose of the rules issued on February 26, directing the state to explain why Ivy should not be granted permanent bail in five cases.

On May 9 last year, the former NCC mayor was arrested in connection with garment worker Minarul murder case and later she was shown arrested in nine other criminal cases.

The HC granted bail to Ivy, former senior vice-president of the Narayanganj district Awami League, whose political activities are banned, in all the 10 cases on November 9 last year and February 26 this year following her bail petitions.

Ivy was shown arrested in two other murder cases immediately after the HC granted her bail in five other cases on February 26 this year, said her lawyer Sazu.

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

On April 30, the HC granted interim bail to Ivy and also issued two separate rules asking the state to explain as to why she should not be granted permanent bail in the cases.

The state then filed two petitions with the Appellate Division seeking stay on the HC bail. The petitions are pending with the Appellate Division.

Measles death toll now 409

FROM PAGE 1
hours to 8:00am yesterday.

Besides, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) added 46 suspected deaths that were not recorded earlier, taking the overall tally to 409.

The directorate said it updated the figures following coordination with Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital and Rangpur Medical College Hospital, as well as the respective civil surgeon offices.

The Daily Star on Thursday ran a report exposing a mismatch between the DGHS's central data and its divisional data.

The report said the actual number of measles deaths is likely higher than the central tally, as data from two divisional offices of the health directorate show at least 34 more suspected deaths than reflected in official figures.

Until Wednesday, no suspected deaths were reported from Mymensingh division in the central DGHS data. However, figures from the office of the DGHS director for Mymensingh division showed 25 suspected deaths.

On the other hand, central data showed 11 suspected and five confirmed deaths in Barishal division, while divisional data indicated 22 suspected and three confirmed deaths since March.

Several other newspapers reported on this mismatch over the last two days.

Among the 11 new deaths recorded yesterday, four were confirmed measles deaths and seven were suspected deaths.

With the four additional deaths, the total number of confirmed deaths rose to 65, while the seven suspected deaths took the total suspected measles deaths to 344, according to DGHS data.

Meanwhile, 205 confirmed cases were recorded yesterday, taking the total confirmed cases to 6,819. In addition, 1,503 suspected cases were recorded during this period, the highest in a single day, bringing the total suspected cases to 49,159.

'Won't stand extrajudicial activities'

FROM PAGE 1
The PM said the government wants to ensure the rule of law while upholding human rights, noting that enforced disappearances, abductions or extrajudicial activities are unacceptable under any circumstances.

He opined that a democratic government accountable to the people has been established through the people's vote, and public expectations from the government are therefore very high. "Such expectations must be reflected in the work of police."

"The fascist government placed the police force against the people for its political interests. After overcoming that dark period, the time has now come to move forward in a new way."

"I don't want to elaborate further on this issue. Let our pledge during Police Week-2026 be that Bangladesh will never return to fascist rule again."

Congratulating police personnel for their role during the February 12 election, he said, "You have proved that it is certainly possible for the police to perform their duties impartially."

Calling police officials "ambassadors" of the government at the field level, he said, "You are not just members of a law enforcement agency; you are the first gateway to maintaining law and order, ensuring public safety, and delivering justice."

Tarique said police must target drug suppliers and the roots of narcotics through strict enforcement of the law as there is public concern over drugs and online gambling. The government does not want to compromise on issue like drugs, terrorism, and corruption.

He said the government is committed to strengthening the institutional dignity, professionalism, and public confidence of the Bangladesh Police.

DEMANDS
Police personnel from different ranks also sought interest-free motorcycle loans for field-level investigations and increased allowances. Officers said investigators currently receive between Tk 2,000 and Tk 6,000, depending on the nature of cases.

The prime minister listened to the demands and assured police members that the government would consider these in line with the state's capacity and public interest.

Speaking at the event, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed backed several

of the proposals, including overtime allowances and motorcycle loans for sub-inspectors and assistant sub-inspectors.

He also proposed honorary promotions at retirement, under which constables would become honorary ASIs and ASIs honorary sub-inspectors.

Constable Tushana Imran of Khulna Metropolitan Police said many officers retire in the same rank in which they joined the force and urged the government to introduce honorary promotions for lower-ranked police personnel.

Officer-in-Charge Kamrul Hasan Talukdar of Airport Police Station proposed motorcycles for ASIs and SIs to improve field operations.

The PM said the demands have "valid reasons" but raised concerns over the ethics of providing interest-free vehicle loans when farmers still receive loans with interest.

Mir Ashraf Ali, deputy inspector general of the Special Branch, called for a separate pay scale for police similar to those enjoyed by the judiciary and armed forces, citing the force's long working hours and specialised responsibilities. He added that police in many countries enjoy separate pay structures.

He also urged the government to lift restrictions on releasing funds for police infrastructure and resume stalled projects involving police stations, barracks, and outposts.

At the programme, Inspector General of Police Md Ali Hossain Fakir stressed the need to increase manpower, saying that the number of operational police personnel remains low compared with the country's population and international standards.

Salahuddin also proposed establishing two new police academies in Chattogram's Jungle Salimpur area following recent anti-crime operations there. Earlier, a Rab member was killed in an attack in the area.

Presenting several welfare recommendations to the prime minister, the home minister said introducing overtime allowances for duties beyond regular working hours is essential to boost morale. The initiative is expected to cover ranks from inspector down to constable.

On healthcare, he noted that the prime minister already approved the modernisation of central and divisional police hospitals.

Tehran sends

FROM PAGE 1
hit and damaged a freighter sailing towards a port in Qatar.

The United Arab Emirates accused Iran of being behind another attack that targeted its territory in what would be, if confirmed, only the second alleged strike on a Gulf country since the start of the month-old truce, reports AFP.

"We will never bow down to the enemy, and if there is talk of dialogue or negotiation, it does not mean surrender or retreat," Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on X yesterday.

Tehran's military chief Ali Abdollahi, meanwhile, met the country's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei and received "new directives and guidance for the continuation of operations to confront the enemy", according to Iranian state television.

Qatar's defence ministry said a freighter arriving in the country's waters from Abu Dhabi was hit by a drone yesterday off the port of Mesaieed.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said the bulk carrier reported being struck by an unknown projectile.

"There was a small fire that has been extinguished, there are no casualties. There is no reported environmental impact," it said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Iran's Fars news agency reported that "the bulk carrier was struck near the coast of Qatar was sailing under a US flag and belonged to the United States."

In a social media post yesterday, the spokesman for the Iranian parliament's national security commission warned the United States: "Our restraint is over as of today."

"Any attack on our vessels will trigger

a strong and decisive Iranian response against American ships and bases," Ebrahim Rezaei said.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards had threatened the day before to target US interests in the Middle East if its tankers came under fire — as they did on Friday when a US fighter jet fired on and disabled two Iran-flagged vessels in the Gulf of Oman.

The United Arab Emirates said that its territory had also come under drone attack, and called out Iran by name. Iran's neighbour Kuwait also reported an attempted attack.

"At dawn today, the armed forces detected a number of hostile drones in Kuwaiti airspace, which were dealt with in accordance with established procedures," the military posted.

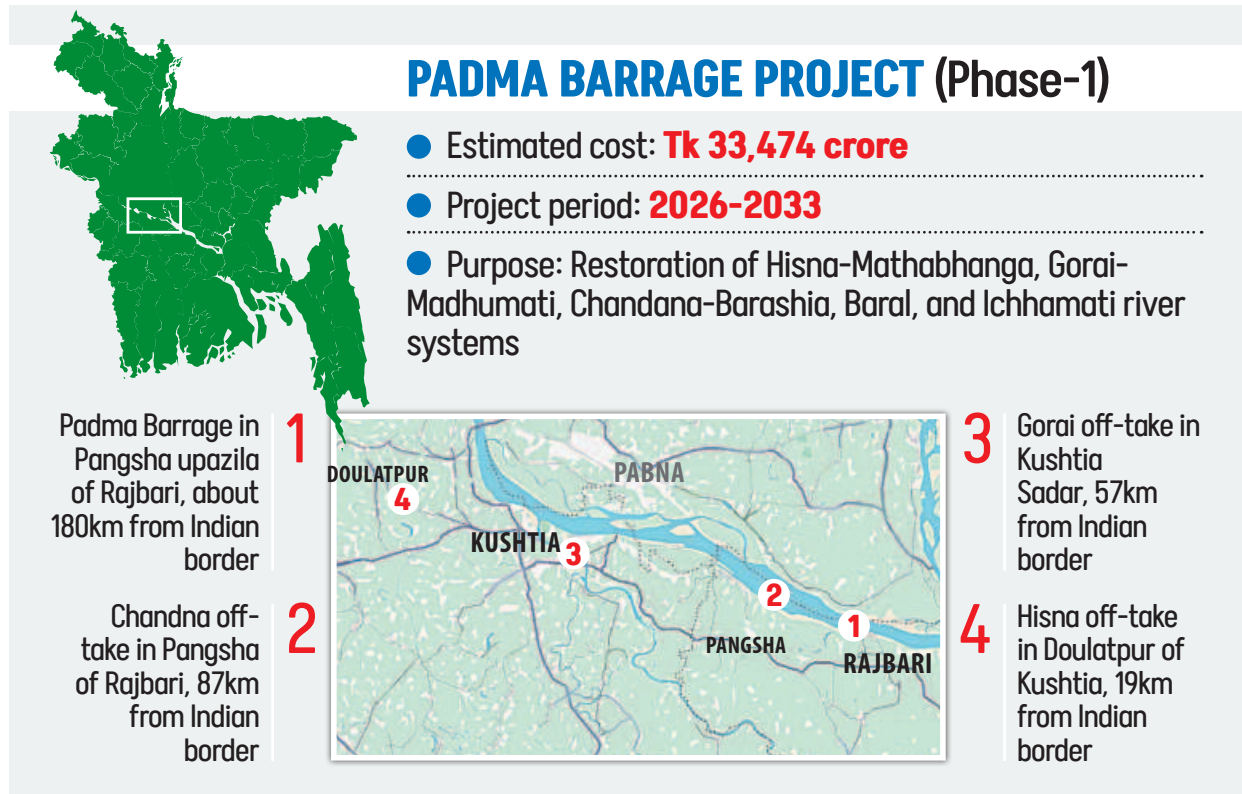
In Seoul, defence ministry spokesman Park Il told reporters that a South Korean cargo vessel had been hit on Monday and was damaged by fire before making its way to port in Dubai.

The world has lost about 1 billion barrels of oil over the past two months and energy markets will take time to stabilise even if flows resume, Saudi Aramco's CEO said yesterday.

"Our objective is simple: keep energy flowing, even when the system is under strain," Amin Nasser told Reuters in a statement after Aramco reported a 25 percent jump in net profit in its first-quarter.

Iran has choked off the Strait of Hormuz — a vital route out of the Gulf for oil, gas and fertiliser, seeking to wield economic leverage over the United States and its allies.

The US Navy, meanwhile, is blockading Iran's ports, at times disabling or diverting ships heading to and from them.



Care gaps push patients to crowd Dhaka hospitals

FROM PAGE 1
The authorities and the parents had no other choice but to arrange the place for the baby on the floor as the 100-bed specialised facility had already been overwhelmed with a surge of child measles patients from across the country.

"There was no vacant seat, so we had to make the bed on the floor," Tariqul's mother Takmina Begum said quietly.

Eight-month-old Yasin's journey was no easier. Doctors at Gazipur Sadar Hospital referred him to Dhaka after he received treatment for three days there.

His family tried three hospitals in the capital, including Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute, before finally finding space on a mattress near the fifth floor staircase of the Infectious Disease Hospital on Saturday.

"We tried everywhere, but there was no seat," said his grandmother Rehana Begum.

Doctors said many children like Tariqul and Yasin are being brought to Dhaka, often in critical condition, after days of treatment at upazila or district hospitals.

The long journeys worsen their health, while the capital's hospitals buckle under the pressure, recording higher numbers of admissions and deaths.

The numbers tell the scale. Across the nation, 409 patients died from measles or measles-like symptoms, mostly among children, between March 15 and yesterday. Not all the patients' diagnoses could be confirmed due to a lack of testing kits.

Just three major facilities in the capital reported at least 91 of these

deaths. The Infectious Diseases Hospital alone saw 42, the Shishu Hospital 28 and the DNCC Dedicated Covid-19 Hospital recorded 21 other deaths.

These were among the 179, or 44 percent of the total, in Dhaka division.

The Infectious Diseases Hospital was treating 57 measles patients yesterday. The rest of the beds were being used to treat patients suffering from other diseases, particularly from chicken pox and HIV/AIDS.

"Most of the children we receive now come from outside Dhaka, often after treatment at multiple hospitals. They arrive in critical condition, making our task difficult," said the hospital's Superintendent FA Asma Khan.

The DNCC Dedicated Covid-19 Hospital admitted 132 measles patients in the 24 hours to 9:00am yesterday.

Seventy three percent of them were from outside the city, according to the hospital's Administrative Officer Asif Haider.

"Dhaka's vaccination campaign began on April 12, earlier than the rest of the country, which may explain why fewer city children are arriving," he said.

The Shishu Hospital had never before faced such a situation surrounding the highly infectious disease, said Prof Mirza Md Ziaul Islam, head of paediatric infectious diseases at the facility. It had 85 measles patients yesterday.

Disruptions in regular and special vaccination drives caused by the interim government's decision to change vaccine purchase systems are being blamed for the situation. The current government is conducting emergency vaccination drives to tackle the situation.

Prof Mirza said some patients

are arriving with very severe and complicated conditions from the peripheral-level hospitals. Many of these facilities are referring the patients to Dhaka because they are not adequately prepared to manage such complications, Prof Mirza said.

"Doctors at these facilities need to be provided with necessary training quickly and on a mass scale to cope up with the situation," he added.

An official at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said many upazila- and district-level hospitals do not have the necessary number of specialists to treat critical patients, so these facilities refer such patients to Dhaka.

The official, on condition of anonymity, added that in fear of possible repercussions in case of deaths, many doctors prefer to refer patients to Dhaka hospitals even when their condition does not warrant transfer.

Moreover, none of the upazila health complexes have ICU facilities. Even the government hospitals in around 20 districts do not have any ICUs, leaving little scope for doctors to manage critical cases, the official added.

Contacted, Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan, director (hospital) of DGHS, said many parents are also taking their children to Dhaka hospitals due to panic over the situation.

Replying to a question, he said a meeting will be held today with all directors and heads of paediatric departments of government medical college hospitals to discuss relevant issues, including referrals and training.

"Some new decisions may be taken there," he told The Daily Star.

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Trial of Taposh,
Nanak in July
uprising case
begins June 8

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The trial of former DSCC mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, former minister Jahangir Kabir Nanak, and 26 others is set to begin on June 8 in a crimes against humanity case over the killing of nine people in Mohammadpur during the July uprising.

A tribunal yesterday fixed the date for opening statements and recording testimony of the first prosecution witness.

The tribunal, led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, fixed the date after framing charges against the accused and rejecting defence petitions seeking their discharge from the case.

While framing the charges, the tribunal said the materials on record were sufficient to proceed with the trial. It then asked the four accused present in the dock whether they pleaded guilty. They denied the charges and sought justice.

The prosecution brought three charges against the 28 accused.

According to the first charge, Farhanul Islam Bhuiyan alias Faiyaz was shot in Dhanmondi and two other protesters

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A vendor displays freshly harvested litchis from Rajshahi, as the arrival of the sweet summer fruit adds a splash of colour and bustle to the market. The seasonal fruit is currently selling at around Tk 600 per 100 pieces. The photo was taken in the capital's Karwan Bazar area recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

MEASLES DEATHS
Petition seeks
Tk 2cr for each
victim's family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition was filed with the High Court yesterday seeking Tk 2 crore in compensation for each family of the 352 children who died from measles and measles-like symptoms across the country.

The petition also sought court directives to establish specialised measles treatment units with ICU, PICU, and diagnostic facilities at all district hospitals and upazila health complexes, and to form an investigation committee to examine the deaths and the public health response.

The writ was filed as a public interest litigation by Supreme Court lawyers Barrister Mohammad Humayun Kabir Pallob, Barrister Mohammad Kawsar and Advocate Md Maksudur Rahman on behalf of the human rights organisation Law and Life Foundation Trust.

Extortion and grabbing
plague Kalyanpur slumPorabosti residents say ruling party-linked groups
allegedly involved as police turn a blind eyeSHAHEEN MOLLAH and
MUNTAKIM SAAD

Several groups, some claiming links to the ruling party, have allegedly been involved in grabbing shops and slum houses, as well as extortion and intimidation, in the Kalyanpur Porabosti slum area of Dhaka.

Many victims said they sought law enforcers' intervention, to no avail. Some have left the area out of fear, while others said they were forced to comply with the alleged perpetrators' demands.

The Daily Star learned of around 15 such incidents. In some cases, victims filed complaints with police, while others remained silent fearing reprisals.

Many also alleged that police tried to settle the issues between victims and criminals.

Md Russel, 40, a contractor who secured a waste management contract at Ibn Sina Hospital's Kalyanpur branch on April 1 this

year, alleged that one Sohag tried to take over the work and later demanded Tk 15,000 in monthly extortion from him.

Sohag, who claims to be a Jubo Dal activist, has allegedly

Sohag, who claims to be a Jubo Dal activist, has allegedly established control over parts of the slum and nearby areas with the help of his relatives and some teen gang members. He buys scrap goods and stolen materials at low prices by intimidating shop owners and uses his group to control local contracting work.

VICTIMS

established control over parts of the slum and nearby areas with the help of his relatives and some teen gang members.

When Russel refused, Sohag allegedly led a group of 20-25

people who abducted him from in front of Mizan Tower on April 10, took him inside the slum, and beat him. Locals later rescued him after hearing his screams and took him to a hospital.

The accused individuals claim affiliation with BNP, Jubo Dal, or Swechchhasebak Dal, but no committees of those organisations currently exist in the area. They attended Awami League programmes in the past and now join BNP rallies to use this political identity while engaging in criminal activities.

SHAKIL AHMED SWAPAN
General secretary, ward-11 unit of BNP

Russel also said he filed a complaint with Mirpur Police Station two days later, but police subsequently compelled him to settle the matter with the accused.

Victims said Sohag buys scrap

goods and stolen materials at low prices by intimidating shop owners and uses his group to control local contracting work. Allegations of mugging, assault, abduction, and grabbing houses have also been raised against him.

Nasima Azad, another victim, said Comfort Kamal — who claims to be convener of the Ward II Swechchhasebak Dal unit — has been forcibly collecting Tk 5,000 monthly from her shop in Deshmoy Super Market adjacent to the slum for the past 20 months.

After lodging complaints with the market authorities, she was advised to approach law enforcers. She filed a general diary with Mirpur Police Station on October 20, 2025, and later a case on February 2, 2026, but has yet to receive any remedy.

Nasima said she has been struggling financially since her husband died in 2021. She currently lives in Singair of

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

'Planned cities
key to better
public health'Dr Javad Koohsari stresses
parks, sidewalks, open
spaces at UPL podcast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite major advances in medical science, non-communicable diseases, like diabetes and cardiovascular disease, continue to rise globally, causing nearly 70 percent of deaths worldwide.

This has made policymakers realise that treatment alone is not enough, and governments cannot continue building hospitals endlessly without focusing on prevention.

Urban planners and designers, therefore, have an important role in creating healthier cities that can reduce disease and ease pressure on healthcare systems.



A city does not become better by chance. It must be carefully designed, planned, and continuously improved.

Internationally renowned researcher Dr Javad Koohsari shared these observations during a UPL Podcast titled "(Re)Designing Urban Public Open Spaces for Health", held at the University Press Limited (UPL) head office yesterday.

The session was moderated by Dr Akter Mahmud, professor of Urban and Regional Planning at Jahangirnagar University.

Dr Koohsari, founder and director of Urban Design Science for Health Lab and a faculty member at Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, said his interest in the connection

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

DSCC launches
pre-monsoon
Aedes larvae survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation yesterday launched its first pre-monsoon Aedes mosquito larvae survey under its own management to prevent mosquito-borne diseases, including dengue and chikungunya, in the capital.

DSCC Administrator Abdus Salam formally inaugurated the survey at Buriganga Hall of Nagar Bhaban in the morning.

Under the 12-day survey, a total of 2,250 houses, 30 from each of DSCC's 75 wards, have been selected through a randomised scientific sampling process.

A total of 36 field workers from DSCC and the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

NCP demands
roadmap for
local govt pollsAnnounces names of
100 candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party (NCP) spokesperson Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain yesterday demanded that the government immediately publish a clear roadmap for the upcoming local government elections.

He made the demand at a press conference at NCP's central office in Dhaka's Banglamotor after the party announced the names of 100 candidates for the polls.

"The government is saying the elections will be held very soon. But how long is this 'very soon'? It could be five months, or it could be five years," Asif said, demanding a specific timeline for city corporation, upazila and municipality elections.

Asif also said NCP's local government election steering committee had announced the first list of 100 candidates from different backgrounds, including former BNP and Jamaat activists, independents, and former Awami League activists who supported the July movement.

Citing deterioration in law and order situation and recent border killings, Asif said the elected government had failed to ensure public security.

He urged the government to take a strong diplomatic position on border killings and summon the Indian envoy for an explanation.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Hawkers occupy the footpath in front of Dhaka Shishu Hospital in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, forcing pedestrians to walk through a narrow, crowded passage. The illegal occupation continues to cause suffering for hospital-goers, many of whom visit the facility with children. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

LAWYER MURDER
HC rejects
Chinmoy's
bail pleaVerdicts on 4 more
petitions today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday rejected a bail petition filed by former ISKCON leader Chandan Kumar Dhar, also known as Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari, in a murder case.

The case was filed with Chattogram Kotwali Police Station after Advocate Saiful Islam Alif was beaten and hacked to death on November 26, 2024, during violent clashes near the Chattogram Court Building.

The HC bench of Justice KM Zahid Sarwar and Justice Sheikh Abu Taher rejected the petition as the trial court has started recording statements of witnesses in the case, said Chinmoy's lawyer Apurba Kumar Bhattacharya.

Kangsha gasps for survival

Siltation, illegal grabbing choke once-mighty river in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The Kangsha River in Mymensingh's Dhobaura upazila, once a key lifeline for local people, has long been gasping for survival.

The once-mighty river supported irrigation, fisheries, goods transportation and riverine communication with other areas of Mymensingh, Netrokona and neighbouring districts.

But years of siltation and grabbing by influential quarters have left the river on its deathbed, choking its natural flow and reducing it to a narrow channel amid vast sandy stretches during the dry season.

Locals alleged that vested groups have long been encroaching on the river and obstructing its flow for different purposes, including fish farming, while the authorities concerned have turned a blind eye to the menace.

Like the Kangsha, other rivers in the upazila, including the Satar Khali, Ghaghatia, Taraboi, Sutia, Gdaira and Pachai, are also facing a similar plight.

"Earlier, the river provided water for irrigation round the year. Now it is barely clinging to life," said Mahmud Hossain, a resident of Taraikandi village.

Zakirul Islam Talukdar, chairman of



PHOTO: STAR

Goatola Union Parishad, said the river can no longer drain excess water during the monsoon due to siltation, often resulting in flash floods and damage to crops.

SM Abid Hossain, sub-divisional engineer of the Bangladesh Water Development Board in Mymensingh, said the river is located in a floodplain area, where onrush of upstream water brings in a huge amount of silt every season.

As such, dredging would not be sustainable in the river's context, he said.

"We are considering expansion of the floodplain so that the floodwaters can spread to adjacent areas and reduce the extent of river erosion," he added.

Dhobaura UNO Md Mosharrif Hossain said they are working on proposals for proper management of the rivers in the upazila.

Gas blast leaves five of family burnt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Five members of a family, including three children, suffered burn injuries in a suspected gas explosion at a flat in Narayanganj's Fatullah early yesterday.

The incident took place at a ground-floor apartment of an eight-storey building in Uttar Bhuigar Girdhara, according to the Fire Service and Civil Defence.

The injured are Md Kalam, 45, his wife Sayma, 40, and their children - Munna, 12, Munni, 10, and Kotha, 7. They are tenants of the apartment.

All five were taken to the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in Dhaka in critical condition.

Kalam sustained 95 percent burns, Sayma 60 percent, Munna 30 percent, Munni 35 percent, and Kotha suffered 52 percent burns, said Resident Surgeon Shawon Bin Rahman.

Narayanganj FSCD Deputy Assistant Director Abdullah Al Arifin said preliminary findings suggest gas leaked from a kitchen pipeline and accumulated inside the closed flat.

A neighbour named Rakib, who helped take them to the hospital, said the blast took place when Kalam went to the kitchen and attempted to light the stove.

Court orders DNA test in Netrokona child rape case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrokona

A Netrokona court yesterday ordered a DNA test in the widely-discussed rape case in Madan upazila, where a child became pregnant.

The order was issued after police submitted an application seeking the test, said Netrokona Court Inspector Mohammad Riyad Mahmud.

Earlier in the day, police produced accused Amanullah Mahmud Sagar before the court after the end of his remand period. The court later ordered that he be sent to prison, Riyad said. He added Amanullah did not make any confessional statement during remand.

One held over rape of 10-year-old

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

Police have arrested a man accused of raping a 10-year-old girl in Kashiani upazila of Gopalganj.

The arrestee, Morsalin Sheikh alias Raju, 20, of Nizamkandi village, was arrested in Keraniganj early yesterday. The child's grandmother filed a case with Kashiani Police Station, said Inspector (Investigation) Sheikh Taj Uddin Ahmed.

According to the case statement, on April 7, when the girl was visiting her aunt in Kashiani upazila, Morsalin, a neighbour of the aunt, took the child to a nearby forest and raped her. Later, she informed family members.

She was admitted to a hospital in Gopalganj.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
Lalmonirhat
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.5200.000.07.075.25-1036 Date: 10-05-2026

e-GP Tender Notice No. 39/2025-26

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the work listed below:

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of Work	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing and Opening Date & Time	Tendering Method
1260002	GRRIP/LAL/KAL/VRB/W-06	Improvement of Taluk Shakati -Velaguri UP Border Road from Ch.: 00m 993m by BC (Road ID No.: 152395015) under Kaliganj Upazila, District: Lalmonirhat	02-06-26 16:00	03-06-26 13:30	OTM

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 (<http://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 online through and registered bank's branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). The tender is floated based on PPR-2025.

(Md. Kawsar Alam)
Executive Engineer
Phone: 0258-9986049
e-mail: xen.lalmonirhat@lged.gov.bd

DSCC launches

FROM PAGE 3
Communicable Disease Control branch of the Directorate General of Health Services are taking part in the survey.

To ensure accuracy in data collection, the survey teams are using the digital platform KoboToolbox.

The survey findings will be analysed through the Breteau Index, House Index, Container Index and Pupa Index, which are

expected to help identify future dengue hotspots in the city.

Abdus Salam said dengue has become a major threat to public life and that DSCC has undertaken the scientific initiative to protect city residents from the growing risk. "If the breeding sources can be identified properly, outbreaks can be prevented before they spread widely," he said.

Trial of Taposh

FROM PAGE 3
Md Nahid Hasan, were seriously injured on July 18, 2024.

The second charge concerns the killings of Mahin Mia and Md Rony and the serious injury of several protesters on the same day.

The third charge relates to the killing of six people, including Al Shahriar Hossain alias Rokon, on July 19. The prosecution also alleged that at least eight people, including

Md Nahid Hasan, were seriously injured in an attempt to kill them.

Speaking to journalists yesterday, Chief Prosecutor Md Aminul Islam cited part of a conversation allegedly held on the evening of July 18, 2024, between the then prime minister and Taposh, the then mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation.

"Now I have given direct instructions; now they will use lethal weapons. Wherever they [state forces] find them [protesters], they will shoot directly," Hasina allegedly said, to which Taposh responded, "Yes, yes."

NCP demands

FROM PAGE 3
Asif also said NCP was observing "attacks and bulldozer actions against Muslims in West Bengal" after the state election and strongly condemned such incidents.

He also described remarks by the Assam chief minister regarding "push back" as offensive and sensitive. "The government is failing to take a clear diplomatic stand. It must raise its voice to protect Bangladesh's interests," he said.

Asif also demanded that Sheikh Hasina be repatriated from India since she is now a death row convict in Bangladesh.

Expressing concern over the measles outbreak, he called for declaring it a national crisis and demanded an investigation into negligence in the vaccination programme.

Earlier, NCP Chief Organiser (northern region) Sarjis Alam announced the names of 100 candidates.

"We hope to announce another 100 names in the second phase before Eid-ul-Azha, on May 20. The announcement process will continue," he said.

EDCL ESSENTIAL DRUGS COMPANY LIMITED
395-397, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka-1208

PRESS TENDER NOTICE

Tender Ref. no.: EDCL (Dhaka)/PUR/PT/2026/155 Date: 10/05/2026

Sealed Tender are hereby invited from genuine Importer/ Reputed Suppliers/Authorized Dealers for Supply with Registration of following Vehicles at EDCL, Dhaka, Bogura & Khulna on urgent basis:

Name of the Item	Earnest Money	Cost of Tender Schedule	Last date of Closing & Opening
Procurement of Following Vehicles For Dhaka Plant 01. Jeep = 01(One) no. (Toyota Prado, Toyota-2026) 02. Private Car = 05 (Five) nos. (Non-Hybrid, HONDA-2023) 03. Covered Van, 07 Ton = 02 (Two) nos. (ASHOK LEYLAND-2026) For Bogura Plant 01. Microbus, HIACE = 02 (Two) nos. (Toyota-2026) 02. Private Car = 01 (One) no. (Non-Hybrid HONDA-2023) For Khulna Plant 01. Microbus, HIACE = 01(One) no. (Toyota-2026) (Details as per Tender Schedule)	TK.2.5% of quoted amount	Tk.5,550.00/set (Non-Refundable)	Closing: 10/06/2026 at 3.00PM Opening: 10/06/2026 at 3.15PM

Tender schedule will be sold from the Accounts Department of Essential Drugs Company Limited (EDCL), Dhaka Plant on payment as stated above during office hours on all working days (except Friday, Saturday and Govt. Holidays). No tender schedule will be sold on the opening date of the tender.

The tender will be accompanied by an amount of Earnest Money as mentioned above in the form of Bank Draft/ Pay Order from any Schedule Bank of Bangladesh in favour of "Essential Drugs Company Ltd." without which the tender will be considered as non-responsive.

EDCL authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatever.

N.B: This Information is also available at our Website: www.edcl.gov.bd

General Manager (ce)
Procurement Department
For: Managing Director

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
সরঞ্জাম নিয়ন্ত্রক (পূর্ব) এর দপ্তর
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে
সিআরবি, চট্টগ্রাম-৪০০০
www.railway.gov.bd

নং-৪৪.০২.১৪০০.১১৭.১১.০০১.২৬-০৭৭ তারিখ: ২৭ মে, ২০২৬

যোগ্যতাসম্পন্ন সরবরাহকারী তালিকাভুক্তি/হালনাগাদের জন্য আবেদন আহ্বান সংশোধনী বিজ্ঞপ্তি

যোগ্যতাসম্পন্ন সরবরাহকারী তালিকাভুক্তি/হালনাগাদের জন্য আবেদন আহ্বান বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-৪৪.০২.১৪০০.১১৭.১১.০০১.২৬-০৪৪, তারিখ: ২৬ এপ্রিল, ২০২৬ নিম্নবর্ণিতভাবে সংশোধন করা হলো।

বিজ্ঞপ্তির ক্রম	সংশোধনীর বিষয়	পূর্বে যা ছিল	সংশোধনের পর যা হবে
১০	তালিকাভুক্তি নয় এমন ফি	একক মালিকানাধীন প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্বত্বাধিকারী নাই হলে তালিকাভুক্তি ফি ৩,০০০/- (তিন হাজার টাকা মাত্র) + ১৫% বৃদ্ধি সংযোজন করা হবে।	একক মালিকানাধীন প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্বত্বাধিকারী নাই হলে তালিকাভুক্তি ফি ৩,০০০/- (তিন হাজার টাকা মাত্র) ও নতুন ফি ১,০০০/- (শেখর পাত টাকা) + উভয়ের সাথে ১৫% বৃদ্ধি সংযোজন করা হবে।

বিজ্ঞপ্তির অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে।

এস(২৬)/(২৬২)
GD-1079

(স্বাক্ষর)
সরঞ্জাম নিয়ন্ত্রক (পূর্ব)
১০১১১-৬৬৯৪৪২
cos@railway.gov.bd

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

Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212 Web: www.powergrid.gov.bd
স্মারক নং- ২৭.১১.১৪৬৪.৬৮৪.৪৪.০০১.২০২৬.৩৬৪ তারিখ: ০৭/০৫/২০২৬

e-Auction বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার গ্রিডের জিএমডি, চট্টগ্রাম (সেন্ট্রাল) দপ্তরের আওতাধীন নিম্নবর্ণিত নিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তিটি ওয়েব লিংক <https://auction.powergrid.gov.bd>-এ পাওয়া যাবে।

আইডি	কাজের নাম	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ ও সময়	দরপত্র জমা প্রদানের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়
৩২০	জিএমডি, চট্টগ্রাম (সেন্ট্রাল) দপ্তরের বিভাগীয় ভান্ডার ও বিভিন্ন উপকেন্দ্রে রক্ষিত অব্যবহৃত ও সেরামত অনুপযোগী মালামাল সমূহ যেখানে যে অবস্থায় আছে নিলামে বিক্রয়করণ।	১৪/০৫/২০২৬ সকাল ১০:০০ টা	১৪/০৬/২০২৬ দুপুর ০২:০০ টা

আগ্রহী তিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে <https://auction.powergrid.gov.bd> সাইটের মাধ্যমে নিলামে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

মোঃ সাহমুদুর রহমান
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী (সে.দা.), জিএমডি, চট্টগ্রাম (সেন্ট্রাল)

Office of the Sub-Project Manager
HEAT-11041-CVASU
One Health Institute
Chattogram Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Bangladesh

Memo No. CVASU/HEAT/SP-11041/IFT-3 Date: 10/05/2026

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of goods as follows:

Tender ID No.	Package Name	Tender Closing Date	Tender Notice Publication Date
1273325	Procurement of ICT Equipment for the One Health Institute laboratory at CVASU Research and Farm-Based Campus, Hathazari, Chattogram.	21-May-2026 13:40	
1273326	Procurement of chemicals for the One Health Institute laboratory at CVASU Research and Farm-Based Campus, Hathazari, Chattogram (Phase-I).	21-May-2026 13:45	11-May-2026 11:00:00
1273328	Procurement of chemicals for the One Health Institute laboratory at CVASU Research and Farm-Based Campus, Hathazari, Chattogram (Phase-II).	21-May-2026 13:50	

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 (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for last downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to date & time (21-May-2026 12:30 for Tender ID 1273325, 1273326, 1273328). Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

Signed/
Professor Dr. Md. Ahasanul Hoque
SPM, HEAT, SP-11041, CVASU

PRAYER TIMING MAY 11

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-10 12-45 5-00 6-36 8-00
JAMAAT 4-45 1-15 5-15 6-40 8-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

What Bangladesh should understand about Iran today

As regional tensions continue to reshape the Middle East, former Bangladesh Ambassador to Iran Tariq Karim speaks to Ramisa Rob of The Daily Star about Iran's deep civilizational identity, the historical roots of its resilience, the misconceptions shaping Western policy, and why Bangladesh must rethink its strategic relations with Tehran. Ambassador Tariq Karim is currently Advisor to Independent University, Bangladesh and Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore.



Having observed Iran for a long time, how do you understand the country? I fundamentally believe that nations and societies carry history and culture deeply embedded within them. Human beings are like blotting papers; we absorb history, culture, and memory. These shape how we think and understand the world. A people cannot go against the grain of their historical development.

I was first posted to Iran in 1969, where I undertook a deep study of Iranian history through both foreign and Iranian sources. What I discovered was remarkable. Iran possesses a continuous civilizational history stretching back roughly 5,000 years. Throughout this period, it was ruled directly by only a few indigenous Persian dynasties. Most others were conquerors or invaders who arrived from outside.

Yet every conqueror who came was eventually "Persianized". The Iranians absorbed them culturally. The conquerors might have stayed for decades or centuries, but eventually they left transformed by Persian civilizational culture itself. Iran adopted some influences from outsiders, but never lost its core civilizational identity. That continuity is critical.

The Iranians are Persians first. To understand Iran, one must understand Persianness. The first great Persian empire was the Achaemenid Empire. After Alexander's conquest, the Greeks ruled for a period, but even Alexander became deeply Persianized. Later came the Sasanian Empire, another golden age of Persian civilization. During this era, the Persian language evolved significantly. One form of Middle Persian was known as Pahlavi (a name later assumed by the last Pahlavi dynasty). Then came the Arab conquest and the magnificent Safavid period, during which Persian culture became deeply intertwined with Shi'a Islam. This Islamized Persian identity became a critical defining layer added onto an already ancient civilization.

The Iranian sense of history and identity is extraordinarily strong. I witnessed two very different Irans during my career. I first served there during the Shah's era, when the state glorified pre-Islamic Persian civilization. Later, I returned during the rule of the Islamic Republic, when Shi'a Islam became the dominant ideological framework.

But even after the Islamic Revolution, Persianness remained deeply rooted. When I arrived in Tehran in 1991, it was just before Chaharshanbe Suri, the celebration held on the last Wednesday of the Iranian year. The Iranians still followed many ancient Zoroastrian traditions. Families gathered around bonfires and jumped across the flames, symbolically leaving behind the misfortunes of the past year before entering the new one purified. This revealed the depth of Persian cultural identity, which cannot simply be erased.

Iranian history also explains why the country reacts so strongly to external intervention. Iran has repeatedly experienced invasions, occupations, and foreign interference throughout its history. Yet each time, the nation survived and eventually reasserted itself. Iranians may criticize their government internally, but when faced with an external threat, they close ranks. They unite around the defence of Iran itself.

That is exactly what we are witnessing today. Shi'a Islam is central to Iran's national psyche. Martyrdom occupies a particularly important place within Shi'a culture, rooted in the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), during the events commemorated on Ashura. This historical memory reinforces a culture of sacrifice and resistance. Many Iranians view struggle and suffering as meaningful components of defending their identity and beliefs.

Do American policymakers fundamentally misunderstand Iran? Yes, very much so. American perceptions of Iran remain heavily shaped by the 1979 clergy-led Revolution and the ensuing hostage crisis. But the roots of modern Iranian distrust towards the West go back much further, to 1953, when the CIA and MI6 jointly overthrew Iran's highly popular nationalist Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh after he nationalized Iran's

oil industry. For many Iranians, 1979 was not the beginning of the conflict. It was the culmination of decades of foreign intervention. Americans often begin the story in 1979. Iranians begin it in 1953.

What makes Iran so strategically significant in global geopolitics? Iran's geopolitical importance stems from both its geography and its vast resources. If you examine the map, Iran sits astride one of the world's most critical energy corridors: the Strait of Hormuz. Twenty percent of global oil and gas shipments (and over 35 percent of global fertilizer supplies) pass through this narrow waterway. Much of East Asia, including China, Japan, and South Korea, depends heavily on Persian Gulf energy supplies. This gives Iran immense strategic significance.

At the same time, the global rivalry between the United States, China, and Russia is increasingly shaping the region. Iran's relationships with China and Russia have grown stronger because of shared geopolitical interests and opposition to American dominance.



Naqsh-e Rostam. Rock relief depicting the triumph of Sasanian emperor Shapur I over the Roman emperors Philip the Arab (244–249), shown kneeling in submission, and Valerian (253–260), standing captive. Valerian's hands are concealed within his sleeves as a symbol of servitude. Circa 260 CE.

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At the same time, the global rivalry between the United States, China, and Russia is increasingly shaping the region. Iran's relationships with China and Russia have grown stronger because of shared geopolitical interests and opposition to American dominance.

Women in Iran, despite restrictions, are often highly educated, socially assertive, and deeply influential within families and society. Iran is not a country that can simply be ignored or understood through simplistic stereotypes.

Bangladesh needs to build parallel bridges to Iran while continuing its ties with all states on the western side of the Persian Gulf. Let us not forget that, once the war is over, Iran — a land almost the size of Western Europe, with a population of 93 million and vast hydrocarbon reserves — will focus on massive reconstruction. As in the past, it can once again become a source of gainful employment for Bangladeshi expatriate workers of all categories.

What would a realistic path to ending the Iran-Israel-US conflict look like?

All sides must work seriously to end this war. But any effort to resolve the conflict must acknowledge Iranian historical psychology. Iran is not likely to surrender under pressure. Its identity has been forged through centuries of resisting foreign domination. Every external attack tends to strengthen Iranian nationalism rather than weaken it.

The world also needs to confront the broader regional realities, especially regarding Israel and Palestine. Iran has consistently positioned itself as one of the strongest supporters of the Palestinian cause, even at immense economic and geopolitical cost. Whether one views that as inflexibility or principled commitment depends on perspective. If "Persianness" is the soul of Iran, its heart is Shi'a doctrine. Together, they give the Iranian nation a backbone of titanium to stand up to any foreign intrusion.

How should Bangladesh rethink its relationship with Iran in the changing geopolitical landscape?

Bangladesh's greatest vulnerability is energy insecurity. We have become overly dependent on imported hydrocarbons from the Persian Gulf rather than diversifying our sources or developing our own resources in the Bay of Bengal. We failed to think strategically and anticipatorily.

Iran has survived sanctions for nearly fifty years, yet it has achieved major advances in literacy, education, technology, and industrial development. The country is far more sophisticated and resilient than many outsiders realise.

Women in Iran, despite restrictions, are often highly educated, socially assertive, and deeply influential within families and society. Iran is not a country that can simply be ignored or understood through simplistic stereotypes.

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The Saudi-Emirati cold war and what it means for Bangladesh

MD. HIMEL RAHMAN

On 1 May 2026, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) quit the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and OPEC+, and according to experts, it is planning to boost oil production by around 1 million barrels per day (BPD). The UAE, which is currently the 8th largest producer of oil and contains the 6th largest oil reserves in the world, insists that its decision was motivated by energy policy and not by political factors. However, the decision has widened its already growing rift with Saudi Arabia, which is currently the 3rd largest producer of oil and holds the 2nd largest oil reserves in the world. Riyadh and Abu Dhabi are already engaged in proxy war against each other on several fronts, including Yemen, Sudan, and Somalia, and the energy rift has added a new dimension to the 'cold war' between the two influential Gulf Arab states.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE as Sub-imperial Powers

The rift between Saudi Arabia and the UAE can be viewed as a conflict between two sub-imperial powers. According to Brazilian economist and sociologist Ruy Mauro Marini, when a state, which is not a global imperial power itself, pursues policies in accordance with the interests of imperial powers and acts in an imperial manner within its own region, the phenomenon is called 'sub-imperialism.' Saudi Arabia and the UAE are not global imperial powers. Both of the states have been under the security umbrella of the United States (US) — a global imperial power for decades, and both provided varying degrees of support to US policies in the Muslim World, particularly with regard to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the Iraqi-Iranian War, the Persian Gulf War, the Yugoslav Wars, and the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Libya.

However, Saudi Arabia has been acting as a regional hegemon in and around the Middle East since its creation, illustrated by the Saudi-North Yemeni War (1934), the Saudi intervention in the North Yemeni Civil War (1962–1970), the bankrolling of the Syrian-led Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), the Saudi-led interventions in Bahrain (2011) and Yemen (2015–present), the Saudi-led blockade of Qatar (2017–2021), and the 'kidnapping' and forced resignation of the Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri in Saudi Arabia in 2017. On the other hand, the UAE, despite being smaller in terms of size, population, and resources, has been flexing its muscles around

the region since the 2010s, demonstrated by its overt and/or covert interventions in Bahrain, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Sudan, and Somalia, its growing economic and military footprints across Africa, and its confrontations with Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Hence, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE are acting as sub-imperial powers within the same region.

From Concord to Conflict

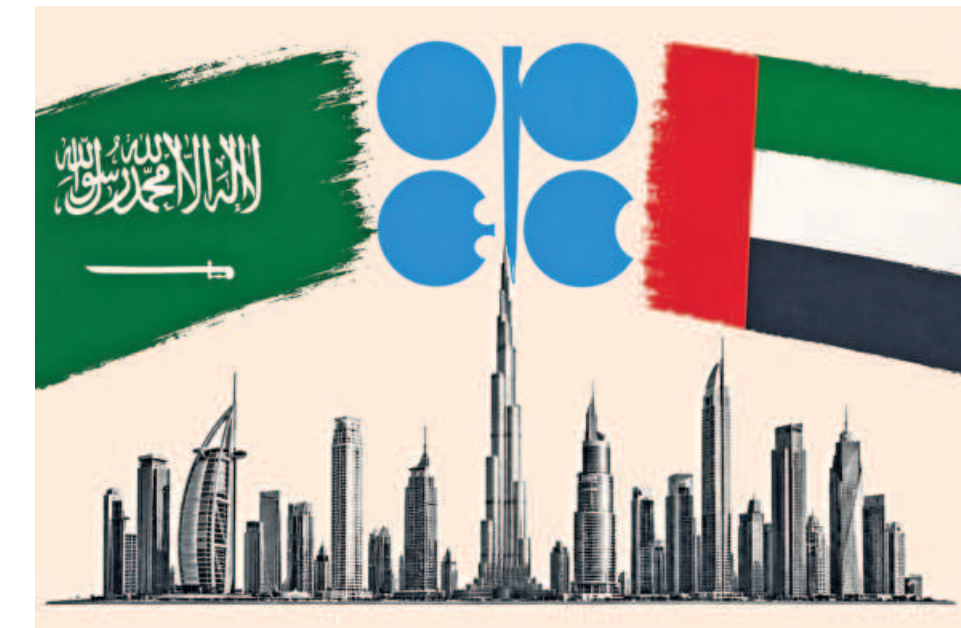
Until the mid 2010s, Saudi-Emirati relations and interests appeared perfectly synchronized, with both having strongman and modernizing rulers in the persona of Muhammad bin Salman (MBS) and Muhammad bin Zayed (MBZ), shared opposition to political Islam, common oil interests, close ties with the US, and shared antipathy towards Shia-dominated Iran. They closely cooperated with each other in opposing the Arab Spring and on the issues of Bahrain, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Qatar. However, by late 2010s, their policies began to diverge, as the UAE grew more confident, and disputes arose on a set of issues ranging from economic rivalry and oil policy tensions to views on political Islam and normalization with Israel.

In 2011, after the start of the Syrian Civil War, Saudi Arabia and the UAE started supporting the insurgent groups against the Iranian-backed Syrian government to counter Iranian influence in Syria. However, in 2018, the UAE normalized relations with the Syrian government, diverging from the Saudi policy. In 2015, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, along with a number of Arab and African states, intervened in Yemen to protect the Saudi-aligned Yemeni government from the Zaydi Shia-dominated Ansar Allah, popularly known as the Houthis. However, Saudi and Emirati strategic objectives diverged: Riyadh prioritized securing its border with Yemen through its stabilization, while Abu Dhabi sought to control strategic ports and maritime routes. Eventually, by 2019, the UAE started to draw down its support for the Saudi-led coalition, and began supporting the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which sought to create an independent state in southern Yemen.

Still, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi cooperated to blockade Qatar in 2017–2021, and the Saudis backed the Emiratis during the intensive Turkish-Emirati proxy war in Syria and Libya in 2019–2020. Also, the UAE's decision to normalize ties with Israel in September 2020 appeared to have tacit Saudi approval. Riyadh itself was negotiating with the Israelis on possible normalization, but linked it to substantial Israeli concessions on the creation of a viable Palestinian state. However, the

expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank negatively affected Saudi-Israeli talks, and the outbreak of the Israeli-Palestinian War on 7 October 2023 resulted in their suspension. But the UAE continued to expand its partnership with Israel in spite of the genocidal Israeli campaign in the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, the eruption of the Sudanese Civil War in April 2023 further strained Saudi-Emirati relations, as Saudi Arabia, along with Egypt and Iran, is supporting the Sudanese government controlled by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), while the UAE is backing the insurgent Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which has been accused of perpetrating mass atrocities against the people of Darfur. In Libya, both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi support the Libyan National Army (LNA) under Khalifa Haftar, but recently both have exerted pressure on the LNA to do their bidding. The



UAE supports the LNA to counter the rise of Islamists and to expand its influence in North and West Africa, and it has reportedly supplied weapons to the RSF via the LNA. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia has nudged the LNA to cooperate with the Government of National Unity (GNU) to ensure stability and to stabilize oil production, and it, along with Egypt, has urged the LNA to stop arms supplies to the RSF. Moreover, Saudi Arabia signed the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) with Pakistan on 17 September 2025, and the UAE mirrored the move by establishing a Strategic Defense Partnership with Pakistan's

and their inability to directly oppose Saudi interests.

The US-Israeli-Iranian War, during which Iran struck both Saudi and Emirati territories, has ironically widened the gulf between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, and indirectly helped the Saudis in their proxy war against the UAE in Sudan. As Iranian strikes caused serious economic losses and attrition of matériel in the UAE, their ability to arm the RSF declined considerably. As a result, the Saudi and Egyptian-backed Sudanese government has recently achieved a string of victories against the RSF, rapidly reversing its earlier gains.



Also, citing Pakistan's growing ties with Saudi Arabia and 'meek' response to Iranian strikes on the UAE, Abu Dhabi demanded the repayment of \$3.5 billion loan from Pakistan. In late April, Saudi Arabia provided Pakistan with \$3 billion to repay the loan, and in exchange, Pakistan deployed 13,000 troops and 10–18 fighter jets to Saudi Arabia to shield it from potential attacks. Moreover, the UAE has expanded its ties with Somaliland, which is *de facto* independent but *de jure* a part of Somalia, and Abu Dhabi is reportedly lobbying other states to recognize its independence. In this case, the UAE is in sync with Israel, which recognized the statelet on 26 December 2025. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, along with Turkey and Egypt, supports Somalia's federal government and territorial integrity.

Thus, despite being firmly anchored in the US-led Western bloc, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are engaged in a 'cold war' against each other due to competing regional ambitions in Asia and Africa, differing strategic and economic priorities, and divergent policies towards Israel and Iran. The cold war has added a new set of complexities to the already volatile politics of the Middle East, and is detrimental to regional stability and international security.

Implications for Bangladesh

Bangladesh shares close economic and political ties with both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE respectively hosting 3.5 million and 0.84 million Bangladeshi citizens, mostly migrant workers. Moreover, Dhaka fulfills a substantial part of its energy needs by importing crude and refined oil from these two states. Accordingly, Bangladesh has so far pursued a balanced policy towards them and carefully avoided picking any sides in the intra-Gulf Arab cold war. This policy has served the country well. However, if the Saudi-Emirati cold war escalates, Bangladesh may face pressures from both sides to pick a side, as Pakistan has recently found out to its peril. The two Gulf Arab states hold considerable leverage over Bangladesh via the issue of migration, and it can be used to influence the country's policy. Hence, Dhaka should carefully monitor the developments in Saudi-Emirati relations, maintain cordial ties with both of them through rigorous diplomacy, and prioritize its long-term national interests over any short-term gains in dealing with this acute issue.

Md. Himel Rahman is a Lecturer in the Department of International Relations at Gopalganj Science and Technology University.

Stop trafficking of youths into war

Govt must clarify what it did to stop recruitment in Russia-Ukraine war

Every time news of a Bangladeshi migrant killed in the Russia-Ukraine war reaches home, it not only devastates a family but also resurfaces the question of why our migrants are being used as pawns in foreign wars. The easy answer is human trafficking; the difficult truth is that our government, past and present, has failed to prevent this trade in human lives lost on the frontlines in distant countries.

The news of the death of 28-year-old Md Riyad Rashid in a Ukrainian drone attack on May 2 near the Russia-Ukraine border comes after a report by international human rights organisations Fortify Rights and Truth Hounds revealed that at least 34 Bangladeshis were killed in the Russia-Ukraine war as of February 2026. However, the informal channels through which news of the deaths arrives suggest that the actual number of Bangladeshi migrants killed could be even higher. For instance, in Riyad's case, his friend Limon Dutta, who was injured in the same drone attack, informed Riyad's parents that another Bangladeshi had also been killed alongside their son, but he could not confirm his identity. Riyad's parents didn't know he was fighting on the frontlines. In 2024, when he left for Russia, he was supposed to work for a company.

According to Fortify Rights and Truth Hounds, many of these migrants have been misled, exploited, and financially trapped into joining the combat. Traffickers in Bangladesh exploit the financial desperation of young men like Riyad, making them believe that they would either work in factories in Europe or serve in non-combat roles in the Russian military. And the recruitment is not free. Hopeful migrants often pay between Tk 1.2 lakh and Tk 6 lakh to brokers. Of course, no one would pay such sums to brokers to join a war in which they have no stake, especially at the risk of losing their lives. What is needed, therefore, is stern action from the government to identify and crack down on these fraudulent recruitment networks.

Recently, the UK government slapped sanctions on a Bangladeshi travel agency, Dream Home Travels and Tours Ltd, accusing it of exploiting vulnerable migrants to support Moscow's war in Ukraine. If the UK could identify Bangladeshi firms allegedly involved in such activities, similar tasks should not be impossible for our law enforcers and intelligence agencies. In the meantime, the government must run a strong campaign to raise awareness about these exploitative recruitment agencies. It must also initiate diplomatic measures to press Russia to stop employing Bangladeshis in military roles and repatriate those already on the frontlines. Most importantly, the bodies of those killed must be returned to their loved ones. Our young men are not foot soldiers to be sacrificed in distant wars.

Save Dhaka from recurring waterlogging

Fix the broken drainage system, restore the canal network

It is completely unacceptable that after years of projects, promises, and public spending, Dhaka still remains unprepared to tackle waterlogging. With the monsoon season approaching, the city authorities have identified 141 locations vulnerable to waterlogging—108 in Dhaka North (DNCC) and 33 in Dhaka South (DSCC). While identifying these hotspots is a necessary first step towards reducing the risks, it also reveals the long standing failure of the authorities to deliver a lasting solution.

As urban planners have pointed out time and again, stormwater cannot drain properly in Dhaka because secondary and tertiary drainage channels remain poorly connected to the city's primary discharge points. In many areas, there is simply no effective route for water to flow into rivers or retention ponds. Even where canals have been partially restored, fresh encroachment and poor maintenance continue to undermine progress. DNCC officials have admitted that several areas, including Ashkona, Dakshinkhan, and Uttarkhan, lack proper drainage outlets because canals and wetlands have been encroached upon. DSCC officials, meanwhile, have linked the worsening waterlogging in New Market and surrounding areas to blocked drainage routes. Unfortunately, despite being fully aware of the causes, the authorities' response remains largely reactive and fragmented. Short-term steps such as cleaning drains, excavating canals, deploying pumps, and setting up emergency response teams may ease immediate grievances, but they are no substitute for a comprehensive and sustainable drainage plan.

And city residents are paying a heavy price for this failure. Even short spells of rainfall now routinely inundate roads, disrupt traffic, and make daily commuting miserable. Waterlogging has already become common in many parts of the city even before the monsoon begins, increasing the risk of dengue outbreaks. At the same time, pre-monsoon road digging has added to public suffering, making everyday movement across the city even more difficult. Meanwhile, the DSCC has proposed another Tk 250-300 crore project to improve drainage connectivity in Dhanmondi, New Market, and Bakshibazar areas, while DNCC has set a target of bringing Mirpur under near zero-flooding conditions. The question, however, is whether these initiatives will finally deliver results.

Dhaka's waterlogging crisis cannot be resolved through isolated projects undertaken separately by the two city corporations. An integrated drainage master plan, based on scientific assessment, proper canal restoration, and coordinated water management across the entire city, is urgently needed. The authorities must prioritise reconnecting canals and drainage lines, recovering encroached waterways and wetlands, and ensuring regular maintenance of the drainage network. Public awareness campaigns are also essential to prevent indiscriminate dumping of waste into drains and canals. Above all, policymakers must recognise that waterlogging is a major urban governance failure that requires a permanent solution.

Why Bangladesh-India relations keep resetting without settling



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

ZILLUR RAHMAN

In a repeat of past experiences, India's ties with Bangladesh, its immediate neighbour and strategic partner, are now entering another phase of recalibration. Since political uncertainty in Dhaka began nearly two years ago, hopes now exist for a restart following a new political order early this year. Diplomatic moves, such as reopening dialogue between officials in Dhaka and New Delhi, renewed military cooperation, and discussions on economic connectivity, indicate that things are looking up after the turbulent period. However, beneath all this lies another, more troubling story of mutual mistrust, unresolved disputes, and strategic concerns.

This new phase in Bangladesh-India relations is marked by a contradiction. On the one hand, Dhaka and New Delhi understand that their confrontation cannot continue; on the other, both parties still lack solutions to the problems arising from the previous disputes. As recent analysis shows, while official and intelligence ties have been restored to some degree, they remain fragile and transactional rather than deep, reflecting the very nature of the relations between the two neighbours.

The first driving force behind the latest development is the internal change in Bangladesh's politics. Following the transition after the uprising and later the change in power through the electoral route, the country's present leadership appears to have adopted a more pragmatic approach to its relations with India, especially in trade and energy. It is well-received by the Indian government as New Delhi always seeks stability in Bangladesh, seeing it as part of its strategic eastern frontier.

However, this does not mean everything is fine between the neighbours now. At least three aspects continue to define their interaction: political distrust, border issues, and questions related to river sharing.

First, problems with political trust caused by past confrontations still

persist. The fear of the other country's influence is the main concern for both. In particular, the fact that the Awami League leaders are still in exile in India causes irritation that cannot be easily resolved. The problem surfaces whenever tensions in Bangladesh increase.

Second, border management and security cooperation remain unpredictable and sometimes contradictory. Despite the existence of specific institutions, friction persists



FILE VISUAL: FATIMA JAHAN ENA

over migration issues, smuggling networks, and enforcement practices. When the official narrative speaks of cooperation on security issues, there is more friction, as evidenced by public discourse.

Third, water distribution problems remain one of the greatest structural issues of Bangladesh-India relations. From signing the Ganges agreement to discussing possible solutions to the Teesta dispute, both sides have failed to overcome problems in this sphere. Given the growing climate stress in South Asia, water distribution problems can soon be a bigger pressure on the relationship.

The outcome of the recently held

West Bengal legislative assembly election introduces a new variable to this equation. With political power in West Bengal now aligning with the centre, there may now be greater room—in principle, at least—for movement on long-pending issues such as the Teesta River water-sharing agreement, which has historically been constrained by state-level resistance. However, at the same time, the electoral outcome reflects a sharpening of political contestation in border regions, particularly in North Bengal, where identity and security narratives are increasingly prominent. This could heighten sensitivities along the Bangladesh-India frontier and, in turn, risk amplifying communal undertones in politics on both sides.

However, the strongest stabilising force in the bilateral relations of the two countries remains economic interdependence. Bangladesh depends

Chinese presence in South Asia. For India, it raises fears of strategic encirclement, while for Bangladesh, it brings some benefits alongside dependency problems. All this makes negotiations even more complicated.

The domestic politics of the two neighbours also affect the process. For instance, India's relations with Bangladesh cannot help but be affected by the subnational political considerations in its eastern states. As for Bangladesh, its position towards India is shaped not only by external pressure but also by domestic issues related to the country's identity and its relations with its neighbour.

Yet, despite all these obstacles, there are reasons to believe that the new period of cooperation will continue. The interdependence of communication and renewed military cooperation, alongside economic interdependence, indicate that neither side wants a confrontation. The latest developments demonstrate the readiness to avoid an escalation. In general, Bangladesh-India relations should be described as a phase of "managed normalisation" in which the two countries begin engaging across different spheres without resolving the existing contradictions.

Thus, the question here is not about improvement, but about whether improvement can be sustainable without overcoming the existing contradictions. Historical experience shows that tactical resets in Bangladesh-India relations occur regularly, but strategic consolidation is rare. Every cycle is usually replaced by the next confrontation as political circumstances change.

It appears that Bangladesh's strategic autonomy should coincide with a stable stance towards its largest neighbour. Meanwhile, for India, the solution lies in balancing security with its strategic goal of regional integration. In both cases, the shift should take place from episodic diplomacy to more institutionalised cooperation.

In conclusion, the Bangladesh-India relations do not hinge upon any single agreement or crisis. They depend on accumulated history, overlapping interests, and recurrent worries. The current phase provides opportunities to go beyond reactive diplomacy. Whether the advantage is used will determine if the thaw turns into long-term improvement or just another interruption of the process.

Bridging the financing gap in our renewables transition



Md Razib is research associate at South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem). He can be reached at mdrazib329@gmail.com.

MD RAZIB

The energy crisis born of the ongoing US-Israel war on Iran has revealed a critical reality: Bangladesh has never been adequately prepared to deal with such external shocks. In any economy, disruptions caused by these shocks are inevitable. The key question, however, is how prepared a government is to manage them—how much it has learnt from previous crises and whether it has taken sufficient precautionary measures to face future disruptions.

In Bangladesh, all governments have followed a similar pattern when dealing with an economic shock. Policymakers tend to adopt short-term measures to tackle the immediate impact, but once it subsides, they don't pursue long-term, sustainable policies. As a result, when new shocks arise, the country's limited capacity to respond effectively becomes exposed, highlighting deep-rooted economic vulnerabilities.

The burden of this failure ultimately falls on ordinary citizens. The combined impact of the Covid pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine War exposed the country's excessive dependency on imported fossil fuels. Did the government successfully implement any long-term strategy to address the energy crisis during that period? The answer is no. The shock triggered by the war pushed inflation in Bangladesh into double digits. Foreign exchange reserves declined

sharply, and the domestic currency depreciated. Despite these warning signals, the government failed to diversify its sources of imported energy and did not accelerate the transition to renewables.

Had Bangladesh undergone a significant renewable energy transition—similar to Pakistan, for example, which significantly achieved a 46 percent share of renewables in its electricity generation mix as of September 2025—it would have been better positioned to handle the impact of the current Middle East tensions. So far, renewables have accounted for only 5.38 percent of the country's total energy mix.

Energy is widely recognised as one of the most critical resources in the global economy and is likely to become a defining factor in the coming years. Therefore, Bangladesh must prioritise a long-term strategy to accelerate the transition to renewable energy. Sadly, there are several barriers to this transition, and among them, the financing gap remains the most significant.

A number of structural challenges continue to discourage investment in renewables. Currency instability, frequent regulatory and policy changes, off-taker risk, weak project pipelines, technology and performance risks, lower sovereign credit rating, a cumbersome

loan disbursement process, land acquisition challenges, and a lack of reliable guarantees dissuade foreign investors from committing long-term capital into the renewable energy sector. Meanwhile, local investors are not interested in investing in utility-scale renewables projects due to the lengthy land acquisition process, short-term lending horizons offered by local banks, and the removal of the "implementation agreement" clause, similar to a sovereign guarantee.

A 2025 assessment by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) revealed that Bangladesh would require up to \$980 million annually to meet its renewable energy goal of 2030, which 20 percent renewables in its power generation mix. In the following decade, the country will need up to \$1.46 billion a year to meet its 2041 goal—30 percent renewables in power generation. This means it must increase its existing annual investment flow of \$238 million by four to six times in the next 5-15 years. Public finance cannot meet these funding requirements on its own, necessitating large-scale private investment. The country also faces a lack of strong bankable projects due to the absence of feasibility studies and unresolved issues around land or rooftop access.

Though the Bangladesh Bank has expanded its green financing scheme to Tk 1,000 crore, the loan ceiling of Tk 30 crore remains far below the capital requirements of utility-scale projects such as a 10MW solar park. Small-scale renewables projects in rural areas face even greater challenges as financial institutions often perceive small-scale projects as risky and demand high collateral.

The lack of supportive incentives for domestic companies further reflects a gap in policy foresight. When

procurement entities prepare tender documents, they often believe that adding more conditions increases credibility. Consequently, they impose requirements that local companies find difficult to meet. For example, in a 10MW project, the tender security requirement may be around Tk 2 crore. How many companies in Bangladesh are capable of providing such a large tender deposit? Obtaining a Bank Guarantee (BG) facility may also cost Tk 2-3 crore. If such a large amount of capital becomes tied up in a single security deposit, a company's other business operations may come to a halt. As a result, many companies are compelled to seek foreign partners as securing such a large fund locally is difficult. Although authorities often claim that they have established strict procurement systems, these systems do not necessarily benefit local companies.

To address these challenges, Bangladesh must urgently reform the existing financing scheme for renewable energy projects. The government should expand the Bangladesh Bank's refinancing schemes by collaborating with development partners to mobilise additional funds and strengthen financing capacity. Financing procedures need to be simplified and made more accessible.

Additionally, the government should introduce low-cost, dedicated financing schemes for small-scale renewables projects such as rooftop solar and solar irrigation. It can also offer a credit risk guarantee scheme and a dedicated green finance facility with scope for pre-finance to accelerate the flow of funds for small-scale renewable energy projects. Finally, the government should introduce a feed-in tariff policy to facilitate both domestic and foreign investment in renewable energy technologies.

Online child safety needs age assurance, not age policing

Khan Khalid Adnan is advocate at the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, fellow at the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, and head of the chamber at Khan Saifur Rahman and Associates in Dhaka.

Azfar Adib is senior member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) and a PhD student in Concordia University, Canada.

KHAN KHALID ADNAN and AZFAR ADIB

Bangladesh's digital child protection policy still rests on a dangerously comforting illusion: that harmful online content can be managed by blocking websites. It is a politically convenient approach, because it allows the state to appear decisive without confronting the actual architecture of digital harm. It is also a technically weak approach. Bangladesh has already relied on mass blocking, including the blocking of 1,279 pornographic websites in 2019, but a blocked URL does not protect anyone. Children do not experience internet only through a list of prohibited websites. It happens through phones, feeds, games, livestreams, messaging apps, search results, advertising systems, influencer content, and increasingly, AI interfaces. A policy designed for static websites is badly mismatched with a digital environment built around algorithmic exposure.

In Bangladesh, internet access is overwhelmingly mobile and deeply embedded in everyday life. BTRC data showed that as of January 2026, Bangladesh had some 12.90 crore internet subscribers, with mobile connections accounting for the vast majority. That scale makes the relevant question unavoidable: not whether children are online, but whether Bangladesh has any credible system for deciding which digital spaces they should be allowed to enter, at what age, and under what safeguards. At present, the answer is largely no.

The United Kingdom's Online Safety Act requires strong age checks for services allowing pornography, and Ofcom has made clear that simply ticking a box to claim adulthood is no longer enough. Australia has gone further, requiring age-restricted social media platforms to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 from creating or keeping accounts, backed by penalties that

can reach 49.5 million Australian dollars. Indonesia, in March 2026, moved to restrict under-16 users from high-risk platforms including TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X. The European Union is also developing a privacy-preserving age verification approach, including a tool that allows users to prove they are over 18 without disclosing other personal information. These jurisdictions differ sharply in law and politics, but they are converging on one principle: age

design age-appropriate access into their systems before harm occurs. Criminal law can punish an offender, but it cannot by itself stop a 12-year-old from entering an adult content site, joining an unsafe stranger chat, being nudged into gambling, or receiving self-harm content through recommendation systems.

The Cyber Security Ordinance 2025, later ratified as Cyber Security Act 2026, has changed the legal landscape by replacing the Cyber Security Act 2023. Public reporting

appeal mechanisms, data minimisation rules, and penalties for negligent design. Without those elements, Bangladesh is not regulating children's digital access. It is merely reacting to the worst outcomes of unregulated access.

There is, however, a legitimate danger in rushing toward age verification without safeguards. Bangladesh's history of digital regulation gives citizens every reason to fear that a child safety policy could become another surveillance instrument. Age

to facial age estimation to trusted third-party tokens that confirm only whether a user is above or below a legal threshold. The best systems do not reveal identity when identity is unnecessary. The question should not be, "Who is this user?" It should be, "Is this user old enough for this service?" The OECD has warned that age assurance laws are spreading quickly while implementation remains complex, especially because online services operate across borders and because many services used by children still have serious gaps in their age-related practices. Bangladesh should learn from this complexity, not use it as an excuse for inaction.

The mental health and safety risks are not speculative. The US Surgeon General has stated that current evidence cannot conclude social media is sufficiently safe for children and adolescents, and has called for stronger age-appropriate health and safety standards, better privacy protections, and policies that reduce exposure to harm. Bangladesh should not wait for a domestic tragedy to accept a global evidence base that is already strong enough to demand regulatory action.

A credible Bangladeshi approach would begin by abandoning the fantasy that blocking websites equals protecting children. It would place legal duties on high-risk services, require privacy-preserving age checks for adult content and gambling, demand stronger protections in social media and gaming environments, and prohibit platforms from using children's data to optimise addictive engagement. It would also require transparency from platforms about underage users, content exposure, complaint handling, and algorithmic safeguards. Most importantly, it would subject both companies and regulators to independent oversight.

Bangladesh can either remain trapped in a censorship-based model that is easy to announce and easy to bypass, or it can build a rights-respecting age assurance regime that protects children without turning every citizen into a monitored subject. The first option is familiar, ineffective, and politically lazy. The second is difficult, technical, and institutionally demanding—but necessary. Child online safety will not come from blocking yesterday's websites. It will come from governing today's platforms with seriousness, restraint, and accountability.



FILE VISUAL: MAHIYA TABASSUM

can no longer remain a fiction written into a sign-up form.

Bangladesh is not behind merely because it lacks a specific age assurance law. It is behind because its regulatory instinct remains reactive, moralistic, and enforcement-heavy. The state blocks after panic, prosecutes after harm, and announces crackdowns after public outrage. What it does not do is require platforms, app stores, payment systems, gaming environments, and AI services to

on its approval noted provisions relating to online gambling, sexual harassment of women and children in cyberspace, and the recognition of internet access as a civic right. Those are important developments, but they do not amount to a coherent age assurance framework. They still treat child safety mainly as a matter of offences and punishment. A serious framework would instead define platform duties, minimum age thresholds, verification standards, independent audits,

assurance cannot mean forcing every user to surrender national identity data to every platform, nor can it mean building a central database of what citizens read, watch, play, or discuss. A child protection system that destroys privacy would be another policy failure dressed up as reform.

This is why Bangladesh needs age assurance, not crude age policing. Age assurance can include a spectrum of methods, from document-based verification

Good teaching still matters, but it's no longer enough



Dr Syed Saad Andaleeb is distinguished professor emeritus at the Pennsylvania State University in the US, and former vice-chancellor of BRAC University.

SYED SAAD ANDALEEB

Student satisfaction is still one of the most widely used indicators of education quality, shaping expectations for what effective teaching must deliver. There's a long-held belief in this regard about three core attributes of good education: that if teachers are knowledgeable, teach well, and connect meaningfully with students, satisfaction will follow. That belief is not wrong. But today, it is no longer enough.

From over two decades of research on student satisfaction, evidence suggests that there is a decoupling underway in the education landscape: the relationship between the three core attributes and student satisfaction has weakened substantially, not because these attributes have lost their intrinsic value, but because the locus of value creation in higher education has fundamentally shifted from an instructor-centred model to a broader, more complex ecosystem-based model.

In Bangladesh, for example, the classroom is no longer the sole centre of learning. Students today are shaped by a widening and expanding ecosystem that extends far beyond the teacher. Private coaching still plays a significant role, especially in Bangladesh's dispersed colleges under the National University system, in translating classroom material into exam success, often becoming the space where students feel they truly "learn." YouTube lectures, Facebook groups, Massive Open Online Courses (Coursera, edX, Udem, Khan Academy), and informal peer networks have also become integral to how students understand and pursue their coursework. AI (ChatGPT, Claude, Google, etc.) has entered public and private universities to "assist" students in thinking and writing creatively, but also often to shortcut the process!

At the same time, institutional systems—registration processes, advising structures, career counselling, mental health support,

cocurricular and extracurricular activities, campus facilities—also shape students' daily experience in ways that influence how they ultimately evaluate their education.

This broader context plays out differently across public and private universities, but the underlying pattern is similar. In many public universities, large class sizes and limited resources mean that even highly capable teachers must work within constraints that push students towards external support systems that often become essential complements to formal instruction. In private universities, where smaller class sizes and more structured teaching environments are common,

more. Their judgments are shaped not only by what happens in the classroom, but also by whether their degree feels relevant to the job market, whether institutional systems are efficient and supportive, and whether the overall experience justifies the investment they are making in their education.

One unique dimension of Bangladeshi education is the entrenched coaching culture. When students come to rely on external coaching to perform well in a course, the perceived value of classroom teaching inevitably changes. A teacher may be competent, even excellent, but if the "real learning" is seen to occur outside the classroom, the link between in-class teaching and satisfaction weakens. This creates a quiet paradox in the system: students may respect their teachers, yet feel dissatisfied with their educational experience.

We must therefore be clear about what is changing and what is not. Good teaching remains indispensable. Without it, the system would quickly collapse. But it is no

longer sufficient on its own. A strong and well-crafted lecture cannot compensate for administrative inefficiencies, outdated curricula, weak links to the job market, or a system that does not adequately support students as they navigate their academic journey. Students today are not only evaluating their teachers; they are evaluating their entire educational experience.

This shift calls for a rethinking of the teacher's role. The teacher is no longer the sole source of knowledge, but they are also not marginal. Instead, the teacher can serve as a central node within a wider network of learning, one that includes technology, peers, emerging institutions, and external

influences. The challenge is not to resist this change, but to engage with it by integrating new forms of learning into teaching, to connect course content more explicitly to real-world applications, and to recognise that learning now unfolds across multiple, overlapping spaces.

At the same time, the burden of student satisfaction can no longer rest solely on the shoulders of teachers. Universities—both public and private—must take responsibility for the full ecosystem in which learning takes place. Academic quality must be

matched by administrative efficiency, relevant curricula, meaningful career pathways, and robust student support systems. Improving teaching is necessary, but improving the academic ecosystem has become equally critical. Bad political influence (in teacher selection, promotion, and administrative positions) is also an indirect but potent disruptor of student satisfaction.

The emerging truth is important for academia: good teaching, often emphasised and driven by external intervention (Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project, Higher Education Acceleration and Transformation, Institutional Quality Assurance Cell and other agency programmes), has not become less important—but it has become less sufficient. Recognising this is important as it is an invitation to rethink how we design and deliver education in Bangladesh.

In the end, the goal is not simply to teach better, but to ensure that students learn more effectively and are better prepared for the world beyond the classroom.

One unique dimension of Bangladeshi education is the entrenched coaching culture. When students come to rely on external coaching to perform well in a course, the perceived value of classroom teaching inevitably changes. A teacher may be competent, even excellent, but if the 'real learning' is seen to occur outside the classroom, the link between in-class teaching and satisfaction weakens. This creates a quiet paradox in the system: students may respect their teachers, yet feel dissatisfied with their educational experience.

students increasingly evaluate their experience through a different lens that values service quality, administrative responsiveness, and, crucially, career outcomes. In both settings, the teacher remains important, but no longer the singularly decisive factor.

When we observe students over time, a clear pattern emerges. Earlier, core teaching practices used to strongly predict satisfaction. Over time, that relationship has become weaker. Today, even strong teaching will not reliably guarantee satisfaction. This does not mean that teachers are doing less, although some in fact are skimping on diligence; it means that students are expecting and experiencing

longer sufficient on its own. A strong and well-crafted lecture cannot compensate for administrative inefficiencies, outdated curricula, weak links to the job market, or a system that does not adequately support students as they navigate their academic journey. Students today are not only evaluating their teachers; they are evaluating their entire educational experience.

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Highway Police, Sylhet Region, Sylhet

Memo No.115/steno

Date: 10-05-2026

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of works as follows.

Tender ID NO.	Package Name	Online Tender Notice Publication Date & Time	Online Tender Closing Date & Time	Method
1271226	Construction of Boundary wall Bhairab highway thana under Highway Police, Sylhet Region, Sylhet	10-May-2026 10:00	20-May-2026 11:15	OTM
1271216	Repair and Renovation of the Sathgao highway thana barrack under Highway Police, Sylhet Region, Sylhet	10-May-2026 10:00	20-May-2026 11:40	OTM
1270825	Repair and Renovation of the Sherpur highway thana barrack under Highway Police, Sylhet Region, Sylhet	10-May-2026 10:00	20-May-2026 14:30:00	OTM

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline and hardcopies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for fast downloading the e-Tender document from the Nationale-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches upto date & time. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system from e-GP help (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

MD. REJAUL KARIM
Superintendent of Police
Highway Police, Sylhet Region, Sylhet
Phone: 02-41100280

GD-1074

'Roid' set to release in Australia and New Zealand

Bangladeshi film *Roid* has secured theatrical distribution in Australia and New Zealand following its premiere at the International Film Festival Rotterdam. According to Variety, the film will be released across both territories in early June through Screenxcope in partnership with DeshiEvents.

Directed by Mejbaur Rahman Sumon, *Roid* premiered in Rotterdam's Tiger Competition section and has also been selected for the Seattle International Film Festival. The film marks Sumon's follow-up to *Hawa*, Bangladesh's 2022 Oscar submission.

Set in rural Bangladesh before the digital era, the story follows a struggling farmer and his volatile relationship with his wife. The cast includes Nazifa Tushi and Mostafizur Noor Imran in lead roles.

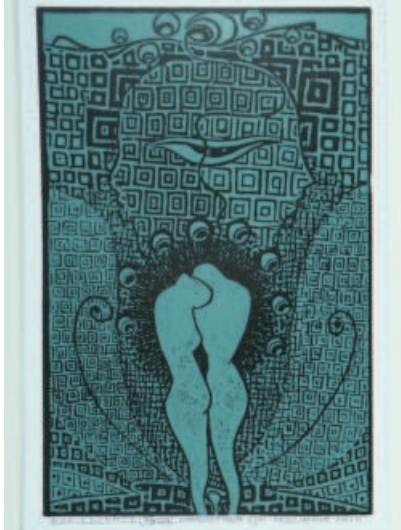


14th Kibria Printmaking Fair: Celebrating a distinct artistic tradition

NAVEEN ISLAM TOREE

Printmaking has often remained one of the lesser-explored forms within Bangladesh's art scene – admired within artistic circles, yet less familiar to wider audiences than painting or sculpture. Over the past few weeks, however, Kala Kendra in Lalmatia has turned renewed attention toward the medium through its month-long printmaking festival, drawing visitors into a world of layered textures, memory, and experimentation.

One of the festival's major highlights, the 14th Kibria Printmaking Fair, concluded on May 9. Held on the third floor of Kala Kendra, the fair brought together printmaking studios and institutions



PHOTOS: ABRAR FAIYAZ NILOY

from across the country alongside works by pioneering late artists Safiuddin Ahmed and Mohammad Kibria.

Over the years, the fair has grown into an important platform within Bangladesh's art scene, helping introduce printmaking to wider audiences while creating opportunities for emerging artists and collectors alike.

The organisers said the fair aims to make printmaking more accessible to the public and encourage greater engagement with the medium beyond conventional gallery spaces. The availability of artworks at comparatively affordable prices has also helped attract younger and middle-class collectors.

The fair is part of a larger month-long printmaking festival that began

on May 1 and will continue until May 23 at Kala Kendra's new premises in Lalmatia D Block. The exhibitions remain open daily from 4:00pm to 8:00pm.

The festival was inaugurated by two pioneering figures of Bangladeshi printmaking, artist Rafiqun Nabi and artist Monirul Islam. Professor Nazrul Islam, artist Abul Barq Alvi, and artist Fareha Zeba also addressed the opening ceremony, while artist Wakilur Rahman hosted the event.

One of the festival's main attractions is the exhibition titled *Pioneers of Printmaking*, currently being held on the first floor of Kala Kendra. The exhibition showcases early works by Safiuddin Ahmed, Mohammad Kibria, Rafiqun Nabi, and Monirul Islam – artists who played a crucial role in

establishing printmaking as a distinct artistic language in Bangladesh.

The fair presents a wide range of approaches to printmaking, from deeply personal reflections to works rooted in everyday life and memory. Many of the displayed works belong to the formative years of the artists' careers, offering viewers a glimpse into the evolution of modern printmaking practices in the country. Rafiqun Nabi's works, in particular, stand out for their emotionally charged visual language. Some pieces focus on human figures and urban moments through layered textures and muted colours, while others experiment with bold graphic forms and striking contrasts.

Alongside the exhibitions, the festival is also hosting workshops and artist talks focused on printmaking practices, creating a learning space for aspiring and emerging artists.

The final segment of the festival, *Contemporary Printmaking Exhibition*, will begin on May 12 and continue until May 23. Bringing together works by both emerging and senior artists; the exhibition is expected to highlight the diversity and evolving language of contemporary printmaking in Bangladesh.



Four Bangladeshi films join Cannes Docs 2026

Four Bangladeshi documentary film projects have been selected for Cannes Docs 2026, a major international platform for documentary filmmakers, producers, broadcasters, and distributors.

The selected projects are *Opekha* by Kazi Arefin Ahmed, *Blue Collars from the Frontline* by Citto Aanonidi (Sumaiya Binte Selim), *In Search of Her* produced by S M Kamrul Ahsan, and *My Cousin* by Sumon Delwar. Chosen through a national open call and jury evaluation process, the projects were recognised for their artistic merit and global potential.

'Silver Sadia' to premiere as Bangladesh's first micro-drama series

Bangladesh's first micro-drama series, *Silver Sadia*, is set to premiere on May 15 on Cinemawala's Facebook page. Directed by Miraj Hossain, the 15-episode series features three-minute vertical-format episodes designed for mobile viewing.

The story follows Sadia, a madrasa student from a lower middle-class family who secretly pursues gaming and livestreaming on YouTube with support from her mother, leading to conflict when her father learns the truth. Starring Sadia Ayman in the lead role, the cast also includes Allen Shubhro, Farzana Chobi, Kamruzzaman Topu, and Rafsan The Choto Bhai in a special appearance.



NEWS

Punish those who attacked The Daily Star, Prothom Alo

FROM PAGE 12
not only tied journalists' hands but also silenced their voices."

Akon praised Mahfuz Anam's honesty and courage for acknowledging that news publishing had at times been influenced by intelligence agencies.

Freedom fighter Nurul Alam Farid said those who attacked The Daily Star while wearing panjabis and prayer caps were people who never accepted Bangladesh's independence.

He alleged that some politicians and bureaucrats patronise journalists for personal interests.

Farid, also editor of Dainik Biplobi Bangladesh, said yellow journalism had deprived genuine journalists of proper recognition.

Barishal City Jamaat-e-Islami Nayeb e-Ameer Professor Mahmud Hussain Dulal demanded the identification and punishment of those responsible for attacking and setting fire to The Daily Star, while Ebaudul Haque Chan, president of the Barishal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, urged the newspaper to publish more reports on the problems and potential of Barishal division.

Cultural activist Pankaj Roy Choudhury called for initiatives to improve children's healthcare services and demanded punishment for those responsible for recent child deaths caused by measles.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Md Obaidullah described The Daily Star and Prothom Alo as

examples of ethical journalism.

Addressing the guests, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam said the future of a newspaper ultimately depends on the trust of its readers.

"If people do not believe in us, do not have faith in us, and do not trust our journalism, they will stop reading The Daily Star. And when people stop reading a newspaper, it ceases to exist. Therefore, the greatest credit for our 35-year journey, especially for our revival after such an attack, belongs to our readers."

He said independent journalism is necessary not only for journalists but also for society, the state, businesses, educational institutions, NGOs, and citizens in general.

"But the most curious thing is that those who need it the most often try to ignore, restrict, or even destroy it – and that is the government."

"After coming to power, governments need to know how people view their actions and whether they are fulfilling public expectations.... It is not the bureaucracy, intelligence agencies, or ruling party leaders who provide that information. Only independent, honest, and dedicated journalists can do that."

Democratic governments and independent journalism are deeply interconnected, he said, adding that The Daily Star had held every government accountable.

"When the BNP was in power,

we practised what we call 'speaking truth to power'. If you examine our role from 1991 to 1996, from 1996 to 2001, and up to the present day, we are proud of our role, [even] during the July movement."

"Every day we carried front-page reports on the deaths. We ourselves were shocked to publish headlines reporting 20 deaths, 35 deaths, 40 deaths, and at one point as many as 64 killings in a single day due to police firing."

The editor also acknowledged that the newspaper had not been able to give Barishal adequate coverage. "We will place greater emphasis on journalism in different parts of the country, especially historically important regions like Barishal. We will highlight your hopes, aspirations, and problems."

The Barishal event was part of The Daily Star's divisional-level celebrations marking its 35th anniversary, following similar programmes in Chattogram and Khulna.

Among others who spoke at the event were Barishal district Islami Andolon Bangladesh Ameer Sirajul Islam; Barishal's Shochetan Nagorak Committee President Tunu Rani Karmakar; Barishal Police Commissioner Md Sharfuddin; Barishal Press Club President Aminul Islam Khasru; Jhalakathi Press Club President Akkas Shikder; Patuakhali Press Club President Md Jakir Hossain; and political leaders from different parties.

Govt to amend laws

FROM PAGE 12
against listed terrorists, extortionists and drug traffickers were continuing.

Urging the force to become a modern and public-friendly institution, the minister said the police must play an uncompromising role in protecting fundamental rights and establishing the rule of law.

To combat technology-based crimes, cybercrime, and cross-border offences, the government plans to send teams from the CID, SB, RAB, and Financial Intelligence abroad for advanced training. Salahuddin emphasized the

need to strengthen the relationship between the police and the public to control crime. He pointed out that public trust must be earned through community policing, bit policing, and "Open House Day" activities.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman attended the event as chief guest; Senior Secretary of the Home Ministry Manzur Morshed Chowdhury spoke at the event as a special guest. IGP Md Ali Hossain Fakir delivered the welcome speech and Additional IGP (Crime and Operations) Khondoker Rafiqul Islam gave the vote of thanks.

Mob beats three dead in Kaliakair

FROM PAGE 12
rescued the three critically injured men before taking them to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared them dead, he said.

Asaduzzaman, an official of the hospital's emergency department, said the three were brought dead to the hospital.

A case was filed with Kaliakair Police Station, SI Yusuf, investigation officer of the case, told this correspondent.

BNP moves to counter its portrayal

FROM PAGE 12
asking them to prepare detailed month-long schedules.

"There is ongoing propaganda claiming the BNP does not want to implement the July Charter. The prime minister has asked us to present the facts directly to the public," he said.

The Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-party alliance, both inside and outside parliament, has been critical of the BNP-led government, describing the party as "anti-July Charter" for not yet taking the initiative to convene the Constitution Reform Commission in line with the charter implementation order. The alliance has also blamed the government for failing to curb the measles outbreak.

The alliance took to the streets in late April and has announced divisional rallies beginning on May 16.

BNP leaders expressed concern that opposition parties are attempting to mislead the public through these repeated allegations. The party has therefore decided to explain the government's position directly to the people.

Senior leaders will monitor the programmes and participate in selected events. Units that fail to conduct effective activities may be asked to provide explanations.

Earlier on Saturday, BNP Chairperson and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman met with grassroots leaders and instructed them to engage with the public, explain the government's actions, clarify its decisions, and correct false information.

Regarding the July Charter issue, senior leaders said party leaders and activists should convey to the public that the BNP is committed to

implementing the charter, which was signed with notes of dissent from different parties.

On the measles situation, BNP sources said opposition parties have falsely claimed that the government failed to manage the outbreak. In reality, vaccination coverage had declined during the previous administration. The last special measles vaccination campaign was held in December 2020, and a follow-up programme scheduled for 2024 was not carried out.

After assuming office, the BNP-led government moved quickly to secure vaccine supplies, and party leaders said sufficient doses are now in stock and being administered to children.

A district BNP president, seeking anonymity, said, "We have identified areas where Jamaat has been campaigning, and we plan to visit those places to clarify our position."

Jamaat MP asks finance ministry not to merge SIBL

FROM PAGE 12
without consulting its "genuine entrepreneurs and shareholders" has caused thousands of small investors to suffer heavy losses.

He insisted the bank could regain confidence if returned to its "genuine entrepreneurs and shareholders" with credible investment and restructuring of the board.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Zainul

stressed he had no ownership ties to SIBL, though he had worked there from its early years until retiring in January 2026 as a vice president.

He said several former sponsors and directors remain capable of contributing to the bank's management and are seeking support from potential investors.

Earlier in February, another Jamaat MP, Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem

Arman, expressed interest in bringing fresh investment into the troubled mobile financial services provider Nagad, now under an administrator appointed by the BB.

On February 8, three days before the 13th parliamentary election, he wrote to the BB governor, requesting permission to conduct an audit to assess the company's position ahead of any potential investment.

British-Bangladeshis shine in London

FROM PAGE 12
winning 33 of the 45 council seats.

Labour candidate Forhad Hussain won the Newham borough's mayoral contest with 25,538 votes, ahead of challenger Mehmood Mirza from Newham Independents Party. His victory marked a significant moment for British Bangladeshis within mainstream British politics.

Forhad rose through Labour's traditional structures, from councillor to cabinet member and now mayor.

In one of Europe's most ethnically diverse boroughs, Forhad presented himself as a consensus builder.

For many younger British Bangladeshis, Forhad's election

symbolised something broader than ethnic representation alone: acceptance into the political mainstream of British civic life.

While Tower Hamlets and Newham drew most of the headlines, the Bangladeshis political presence was equally visible in Redbridge and Barking & Dagenham.

Together, the four East London boroughs now represent one of the most concentrated centres of Bangladeshi political representation anywhere outside Bangladesh itself.

The elections exposed a dramatic fragmentation of British politics. Reform UK gained roughly 1,450 council seats and took control of 14 councils across England. Labour,

meanwhile, lost nearly 1,500 councillors and control of dozens of local authorities, while the Greens and Liberal Democrats also made significant gains.

Yet, East London's Bangladeshi-majority areas revealed a somewhat different political mood. Here, elections were fought less on national identity wars and more on schools, council housing, welfare support, youth services, and the rising cost of living.

The message from these elections was not simply that diaspora communities are participating in British politics.

It is that they are increasingly shaping it.



PHOTO: MONIR UDDIN ANIK

Workers put the finishing touches on a boat in Bhola's Banker Hat area yesterday. With the two-month fishing ban lifted a week ago, many are rushing to complete undelivered boats as fishers prepare to return to the sea.

Planned cities key to better public health

FROM PAGE 3
between urban planning and public health began during his doctoral research, when he noticed many preventive medicine and public health journals publishing studies related to urban design. "The link between planning and health was not widely understood around 2010," said Dr Koohsari, who has published more than 140 peer-reviewed journal articles between 2021 and 2025 and has been recognised among top 2 percent of scientists worldwide in the Stanford/Elsevier Global List. "If a planner talked about health issues, people would ask, 'Are you a medical doctor?'" he recalled. Responding to a question about developing countries like Bangladesh, where governments focus more on treatment than prevention, he said investments still mainly go toward curative healthcare because treatment is more

visible and receives greater public attention. "Urban planning contributes to prevention in a different way," he said. He gave the example of exercise and daily physical activity. Joining a gym requires money, time, and commitment, and many people eventually stop going. Research shows that nearly 70 percent of new gym members quit within six months. However, if a neighbourhood has safe sidewalks, proper lighting, and nearby parks, residents naturally become more physically active without consciously planning exercise. "Researchers call this 'habitual' or 'automatic' physical activity. Urban design can encourage healthy behaviour naturally," he said. According to him, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods, parks, and safe walking environments are essential

for improving public health. If public transport stations are within walking distance and sidewalks are safe and comfortable, people will naturally choose to walk more. He also stressed the importance of protecting public open spaces. From a public health perspective, these spaces are important because they encourage physical activity and social interaction and can often be improved relatively easily. Research also shows that properties near quality parks and public spaces become more valuable. However, he noted that public spaces are often ignored or encroached upon due to political or economic interests. On why governments often give low priority to public open spaces, Dr Koohsari said policymakers need evidence-based economic analysis. He cited research from Melbourne showing that

investments in sidewalks and public spaces can significantly reduce healthcare costs. "This kind of cost-benefit analysis is easier for policymakers to understand than simply saying parks are good for health," he said. He also stressed the importance of inclusive design. "If a public space works well for children, elderly people, and persons with disabilities, then it will work well for most other people too." Dr Koohsari further highlighted the importance of community participation in maintaining parks, gardens, and sidewalks. Finally, he said urban planners and designers carry enormous responsibility because poor planning decisions can affect generations. "A city does not become better by chance. It must be carefully designed, planned, and continuously improved," he concluded.

Extortion and grabbing plague Kalyanpur

FROM PAGE 3
Manikganj and depends on the shop rent for survival, but managing it from a distance has become increasingly difficult. Abdur Rashid, another trader at the market, said soon after he rented a shop on August 1, 2025, Kamal demanded Tk 1,000 from him. When he refused, a group of 10-12 people came to his shop, threatened him, and forced him to sign a non-judicial stamp paper worth Tk 1 lakh on the pretext of settling a dispute. Although the dispute was later resolved, Rashid said the document has not been returned. He submitted a written complaint to the market authorities, but no action followed. Several other traders at the market made similar allegations. Contacted, Rafiqul Islam Rafi, chairman of the market committee, said Kamal had been appointed as an office assistant at the market in August 2024. Following multiple allegations, a three-member probe committee

was formed, which found evidence supporting the accusations. Kamal was terminated in March 2026. He said Kamal had also set up a tea stall inside the market by blocking an alley and collected extortion money from vendors on the footpath outside the market. He advised victims to seek legal action. The highest number of allegations, however, was found against Tarikul Islam Tarik, who claims to be convener of the Ward II Jubo Dal unit. According to locals, Tarik used to work as a construction worker. Since the August 5 political changeover in 2024, he has allegedly been grabbing shops and houses in the slum by threatening owners with photos or videos showing their participation in Awami League rallies. Victims were often forced to sign stamp papers under the guise of selling their properties before being evicted for minimal compensation. Rozina Begum, a victim, alleged that Tarik and

his associates evicted her family from their property six months ago, accusing her husband of attending AL rallies and forcing them to hand over the property at a nominal price. Liton Talukder, now in Saudi Arabia, said over the phone that he had operated a rickshaw garage, a fish business, and a cooperative in the slum. On the night of August 5, 2024, Tarik and his associates allegedly broke into his house, looted Tk 4.7 lakh, and took control of the property. Unable to get any remedy despite approaching local political leaders and police at the time, Liton left the country last year. Local residents also alleged that Tarik's group collects electricity bills at inflated rates of Tk 15-16 per unit. Contacted, Comfort Kamal admitted to taking control of Nasima Azad's shop, claiming that her husband owed Tk 75,000 for construction work carried out in 2017. He denied all other allegations. Both Nasima and

the market authorities described his claim as fabricated and said Kamal had no involvement in the market's construction. Shakil Ahmed Swapan, general secretary of BNP's Ward-II unit under Dhaka North, said the accused individuals claim affiliation with BNP, Jubo Dal, or Swachhasebak Dal, but no committees of those organisations currently exist in the area. "They attended Awami League programmes in the past and now join BNP rallies to use this political identity while engaging in criminal activities," he said, adding that he and others faced obstruction and harassment when they tried to protest. He also urged victims to seek legal action. Contacted, Officer-in-Charge Golam Azam, who was withdrawn from Mirpur Police Station last week, said there had been multiple complaints from Kalyanpur Parabosti, and several individuals were arrested based on those complaints and produced before court.

25 illegal cottages dismantled in Sonadia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar
A total of 25 small, medium and large structures, used illegally as cottages on government land, were evicted during a joint drive by the upazila administration on Sonadia island under Maheshkhali in Cox's Bazar on Saturday. Confirming the matter, Imran Mahmud Dalim, upazila nirbahi officer of Maheshkhali, said the

structures had been built illegally after clearing jhau forests, posing a threat to the island's biodiversity. Members of the Bangladesh Coast Guard, Bangladesh Navy, police, Ansar, Department of Environment, Forest Department, and Fire Service and Civil Defence also joined the drive. The operation was led by Abu Jafar Majumdar, assistant commissioner (land) and executive magistrate in Maheshkhali, the UNO added.

During the drive, the authorities demolished the cottages as well as bamboo, wood and tin-shed structures built in the area. Electricity connections to some temporary tourist cottages were also disconnected. Lt Commander Sabir Alam Suzon, media officer of the Bangladesh Coast Guard, said in a statement that the operation was carried out in the eastern and western mangrove areas of Sonadia from 10:00am to 5:00pm on Saturday.

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

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

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Power Grid Memo No. & Date	27.21.0000.101.07.434.26.2175, May 10, 2026
Loan No. and Title	ADB Project Number (57232-001) - BAN: Power Transmission Strengthening and Integration of Renewable Energy Project.
Contract No. and Title	OCB NO. POWERGRID/ADB/PTSIREP/Package-4 Design, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 132/33 kV AIS Substations at Dhupchanchia, Kumarkhali, Matlab North and Chatkhil including associated 132kV bay extension at Kachua Substation on turnkey basis (Package-4)

- The People's Republic of Bangladesh has applied for financing from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) toward the cost of **Power Transmission Strengthening and Integration of Renewable Energy Project**. Part of this financing will be used for payments under the contract named above. Bidding is open to all bidders from eligible countries described in the section 5 of Volume 1 of the Bidding Document.
- The Power Grid Bangladesh PLC (Power Grid), ("the Employer") invites sealed bids from eligible Bidders for the **"Design, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 132/33 kV AIS Substations at Dhupchanchia, Kumarkhali, Matlab North and Chatkhil including associated 132kV bay extension at Kachua Substation on turnkey basis (Package-4)"** (herein after referred to as "the Works"). The Works under this turnkey contract shall have to be completed within 900 (Nine Hundred) days from the effective date of the contract.
- Open Competitive Bidding (OCB) - International** will be conducted in accordance with ADB's Single-Stage: Two-Envelope bidding procedure and is open to all bidders from eligible countries as described in the Bidding Document.
- Bidders shall meet the following minimum requirements along with other requirements as mentioned in the bidding document:
 - Participation as a Contractor/JV Partner in at least three contracts that have been successfully completed within the last 10 (ten) years, and those are similar to the proposed contract, where the total cumulative value of up to four contracts must be at least: USD 30.0 M (Thirty Million USD), among those one (01) contract value must be at least USD 17.0 M (Seventeen Million USD).
 - The similarity of the Bidder's participation shall be based on the physical size, nature of works, complexity, methods, technology or other characteristics as described in Section 6 (Employer's requirements).
 - The scope of each contract must include design, supply, installation, testing & commissioning of 110/X kV or higher voltage rated AIS/GIS substations with a minimum of three (03) bays including one (1) power transformer of 110/X kV or above voltage rating.
 - For the above contracts executed during the period stipulated above, a minimum experience is required in the following key activities:
 - At least one contract shall be a new 110/X kV or higher voltage rating AIS substation.
 - At least one contract must be in successful operation for a minimum of three (3) years before the bid submission deadline.
 - At least one contract must be completed either in Bangladesh or outside the Bidder's own country.
 - At least one contract must be completed with a new 110/X kV or higher voltage rating transformer with capacity of 75 MVA or higher.

- The qualification criteria of the bidders have been given above. The bidders are advised to inspect the bidding document in detail by visiting the Power Grid website <http://www.powergrid.gov.bd>.
- Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents at the office of the Company Secretary, Power Grid Bangladesh PLC (Power Grid), Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh; Tel: +88 02 226600936-39, Fax: +88 02 226600925; Email: share.cs@pgcb.gov.bd, se.contract@pgcb.gov.bd, xen1.contract@pgcb.gov.bd. The complete bidding documents are also available for download from Power Grid's website <http://www.powergrid.gov.bd>. Eligible bidders who download the bidding document from the Power Grid's website shall inform Power Grid in writing (and provide their contact details) at the address given above, failing which Power Grid shall not be responsible if the bidder does not receive clarifications and amendments, if any. **In case of any discrepancy between the documents downloaded by the prospective bidder and the Bidding Document (hard copy) of Power Grid, the latter shall prevail.**
 - A complete set of bidding document in English language, may be purchased by interested bidders upon submission of a written application to the Company Secretary, Power Grid at the above address, from **12 May, 2026** up to one Working day before the bid submission deadline and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of USD 300.00 (United States Dollar Three Hundred) or BDT 36,000.00 (Taka Thirty Six Thousand only) in the form of Pay Order/ Demand Draft in favour of the Power Grid Bangladesh PLC. The Bidding Document may be sent through a courier for an additional fee of BDT 14,400.00 (Bangladeshi Taka Fourteen thousand four hundred only) for local delivery or USD 120.00 (United States Dollar One hundred twenty only) for international delivery in the form of Pay Order/ Demand Draft in favor of Power Grid Bangladesh PLC (Power Grid). No liability will be accepted for loss or late delivery of the Bidding Document.
 - A Pre-Bid meeting will be held at **11:00 Hours** Local Time on **08 June 2026** at the head office of Power Grid Bangladesh PLC (Power Grid), Avenue-03, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh.
 - Deliver bids:
 - To the address below:
Company Secretary,
Power Grid Bangladesh PLC (Power Grid),
Head Office, Avenue-03, Jahurul Islam City,
Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh.
 - On or before **11:00 Hours** Local Time on **06 July 2026**.
 - Together with a Bid Security for the amount of: USD 550,000 (United States Dollar Five hundred fifty thousand only) or BDT 67,265,000 (Bangladeshi Taka Sixty-seven million two hundred sixty five thousand only) as described in the Bidding Document.

- Late bids will be rejected.
- Technical bids will be opened at **11:05 Hours** Local Time on **06 July 2026** at the head office of Power Grid Bangladesh PLC (Power Grid), Avenue-03, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh in the presence of Bidders' representatives who choose to attend, whereas the Financial Bids shall remain sealed and unopened and shall be placed locked. The Financial Bids of only Technically Responsive and Qualified Bidders shall be opened after Technical Bid Evaluation, whereas, the Financial Bids of those Bidders whose Technical Bids are not responsive and qualified shall be returned unopened after the contract is awarded.
 - When comparing bids, ADB's Domestic Preference Scheme will be applied in accordance with the provisions stipulated in the Bidding Document.
 - Power Grid will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by bidders in connection with the preparation or delivery of bids including costs and expenses related to participation in pre-bid meeting and site visits.
 - Power Grid reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to Bidders.

(Md. Jahangir Azad)
Company Secretary

WEST ZONE POWER DISTRIBUTION CO. LTD.
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)
Office of the Project Director
Upgradation and Extension of Power Distribution System in Monpura Islands Project, Bidyut Bhaban, 35-Boyra Main Road, WZPDCL, Khulna, Email: pdmiuepds@gmail.com & pd.miuepds@wzpdcl.gov.bd

Memo No: 27.22.4785.800.50.001.26.61 Dated: 07/05/2026

E-tender Notice (ICT, OSTETM)

e-Tender for the Project Director's office, Upgradation and Extension of Power Distribution System in Monpura Islands Project is published in e-GP Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the Procurement of following Supply & Installation of Plant & Equipment on Turnkey Basis:

Sl. No	Tender ID	Invitation Reference	Name of Tender
1.	1260141	27.22.4785.600.50.001.26.60, Dated: 07.05.2026	Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 33KV, Each Single Length 7 Km x 4 run x 1C, 300 sq.mm Submarine Cable (total Cable Length: each 7.0 Km x 4 x 1C=28 Km) including Landing Station and other related works on Turnkey Basis under the Project of Upgradation and Extension of Power Distribution System in Monpura Island, WZPDCL, Khulna.

This is an Online Tender, where only e-tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration required on e-GP System (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is mandatory. For more details contact e-GP Help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Shafiqul Islam
Project Director,
Upgradation and Extension of Power Distribution System in Monpura Islands Project, WZPDCL, Khulna

GD-1078

THE FORGOTTEN FRONT

Rumour, resistance, and the Uprising of 1857 in Eastern Bengal

NILADRI CHATTERJEE

For over a century and a half, the collective memory and historiography of the 1857 uprising, variously termed the 'Sepoy Mutiny' or the 'First Indian War of Independence', have remained overwhelmingly anchored within the north-central Gangetic heartland of the Indian subcontinent. The canonical narratives of this subcontinental conflagration evoke the siege of Delhi, the bloody entrenchments of Kanpur, and the fierce resistance in Lucknow. Within this established historical framework, the lower provinces of the Bengal Presidency, and specifically Eastern Bengal (including present-day Bangladesh), have often been relegated to the margins. Imperial historians and early nationalist scholars alike, and even revisionist historians to a certain extent, stereotyped Eastern Bengal as a quiet, loyalist enclave, suggesting that the even tenor of life there remained largely undisturbed by the military and civil upheavals tearing through northern India.

However, careful research based on archival records, colonial correspondence, and local histories reveals a profoundly different reality. Contrary to the dominant scholarship, Eastern Bengal was not a passive spectator to the events of 1857. It was a highly volatile theatre of unrest, characterised by complex intersections of military mutiny, civilian conspiracies, pre-existing socio-religious resistance movements, and the paralysing yet electrifying transmission of rumour. As contemporary readers re-examine the historical records of colonial rule, reading relationally to uncover histories of silence and institutional prejudice, it becomes imperative to reconstruct and revisit this forgotten front of the 1857 rebellion.

The anatomy of the Bengal Army and the topography of discontent

To comprehend why the uprising in Eastern Bengal unfolded in its specific manner, one must first analyse the structural organisation and social origins of the Bengal Native Infantry. The East India Company's military apparatus in the Bengal Presidency was not built upon the local Bengali populace. Following the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the colonial administration deliberately eschewed the recruitment of the ex-Nawab's army, which was composed largely of urban-based Afghan and Pathan soldiers, deeming them politically unreliable. Instead, the Company tapped into the traditional military labour markets of the north-central Gangetic plains—specifically Awadh, Bihar, Rohilkhand, and the Doab region. Operating under nascent and racially charged 'martial race' theories, British officials posited that the inhabitants of the wheat-producing zones of northern India possessed superior physical attributes and a warrior ethos, in stark contrast to the rice-consuming inhabitants of the eastern provinces, whom colonial ideologues such as Thomas Babington Macaulay dismissed as effeminate and unsuited for military service.

Consequently, the Bengal Army evolved into a relatively homogenous body of high-caste Hindu peasants, primarily Brahmmins, Bhumihars, and Rajputs, from the 'Purbia' (eastern) regions of northern India. This reliance on a non-local demographic had profound implications for Eastern Bengal in 1857. The sepoy's stationed in the cantonments of Dhaka, Chittagong, and Jalpaiguri had no organic social, cultural, or familial ties to the local Bengali population. When the colonial government introduced the General Service Enlistment Act of 1856, requiring sepoy's to serve overseas and thereby threatening their caste status, and annexed Awadh, the homeland of the majority of the soldiers, a deep sense of betrayal permeated the ranks. However, because the sepoy's in Eastern Bengal operated in a demographic vacuum relative to their own origins, their mutinies did not spontaneously ignite mass agrarian rebellions in the way they did in Awadh. Their primary objective upon mutinying in and around the military cantonments of Bengal was not to establish a localised alternative government, but to plunder colonial treasuries, release prisoners, and march back to the Gangetic heartland to reinforce their brethren.

EASTERN BENGAL: A landscape of pre-existing discontent

To understand the volatility of Eastern Bengal in 1857, it is vital to recognise that the region was already a cauldron of anti-colonial and anti-feudal sentiment long before the sepoy's voiced their grievances regarding greased cartridges. The first century of British rule had severely devastated the political and economic fortunes of the Muslim aristocracy and peasantry in Bengal. The Permanent Settlement of 1793, the resumption of rent-free grants, and the replacement of Persian with English in administrative courts systematically marginalised the Muslim population. Out of this



A view of the southern gate of Lalbagh Fort in 1875, nearly two decades after the fierce Battle of Lal Bagh during the Uprising of 1857.

economic and social degradation emerged powerful purist Islamic reform movements that fundamentally challenged the colonial order. The Wahabi movement, led in Bengal by the charismatic peasant leader Titu Mir in the 1830s, sought to purge Islam of syncretic practices but quickly evolved into a militant politico-economic struggle against oppressive Hindu zamindars, European indigo planters, and the British state. Titu Mir famously declared that the period of British rule had expired, demanding that revenues be paid directly to his parallel administration before he was ultimately killed in a full-scale military engagement with colonial forces.

Concurrently, the Faraizi movement, founded by Haji Shariatullah and subsequently led by his son Dudu Miyan, gained immense traction in the districts of Faridpur, Bakarganj, and Jessore. The Faraizis propagated the theological doctrine that, under British subjugation, India had become *Dar-ul-Harb* (the land of war), thereby suspending Friday congregational prayers. Dudu Miyan organised a highly structured parallel government, appointing village commissioners (*Khalifas*) to collect funds, settle disputes, and lead armed resistance against landlords.

When the rebellion of 1857 erupted, the colonial administration was gripped by the terrifying prospect that these deeply entrenched and highly organised agrarian movements would align with the heavily armed mutinous sepoy's. Intelligence reports from Dhaka and Faridpur suggested that the Faraizis were holding secret meetings with Hindustani sepoy's. A petition presented to the government stated explicitly that 'the Ferazees in a body were rising and had written to the sepoy's for support'. Prompted by the sheer terror of a synchronised civil-military uprising, the colonial state pre-emptively arrested Dudu Miyan, incarcerating him in the Alipur Jail as a political prisoner for the duration of the conflict in order to sever his communication with the broader Faraizi network.

THE JESSORE CONSPIRACY: Treason in the shadows

The pervasive tension in Eastern Bengal manifested itself distinctly in the district of Jessore, providing a critical case study of how disbanded military personnel and civil administrative structures became entangled in the rebellion. Unlike Dhaka or Chittagong, Jessore lacked a formal sepoy cantonment. However, it housed a detachment of Najibs—an irregular militia employed by the colonial state, primarily comprising retired or disbanded sepoy's from the North-Western Provinces who had previously served in the Anglo-Sikh or Afghan wars in the 1840s. These Najibs were attached to the Dacoity Commission, an investigative body established to eradicate rural banditry using the controversial 'approver' system developed by W.H. Sleeman, superintendent of police for the Dacoity Commission, whereby captured criminals were offered pardons in exchange for testifying against their accomplices. Ironically, the very intelligence-gathering network designed to police the indigenous population became the incubator for a deep-seated conspiracy within its own ranks.

In July 1857, Baboo Guru Charan Dass, a senior Bengali official in the Dacoity establishment, reported that Jamadar Ram Singh, the head of the Najib guards, was engaging in highly treasonable correspondence. Ram Singh, a former *sowar* in Raja Ranjit Singh's bodyguard, had received communications from mutinous regiments in Barrackpore and Allahabad, urging him to mobilise his men. The Jamadar formulated a precise tactical plan: the Najibs were to murder the European officials, plunder the Collectorate treasury (which held ten thousand gold mohurs), set the local bazaar ablaze, release the prisoners from the jail, and march to Murshidabad to join the broader insurrection. Furthermore, Ram Singh openly predicted the imminent downfall of Company rule, asserting that the English would be expelled and Persian restored as the language of the courts.

The colonial response was swift and extrajudicial. The European civilians in Jessore transformed themselves into an

impromptu militia, arresting Ram Singh and his co-conspirators. The Magistrate, E.W. Molony, utilised the psychological leverage of Sleeman's approver system, incarcerating the remaining Najibs until one of them—Bachu Singh—broke ranks and provided a full deposition detailing the plot. The subsequent trial highlighted the suspension of standard legal frameworks during the crisis. W.S. Seton-Karr, the Civil and Sessions Judge of the district of Jessore, was granted extraordinary powers by Governor-General Canning to conduct a summary trial without a jury. Seton-Karr presided over the court with loaded pistols at his side, acutely aware that words which might have been dismissed as idle talk in times of peace constituted high treason during a subcontinental rebellion. Ram Singh was sentenced to death. To maximise the psychological deterrence of the punishment, the execution was scheduled for a Monday morning, the busiest market day, at 'Tin Mohini' (the three crossroads). The spectacle of the Jamadar's corpse left hanging throughout the day was a visceral demonstration of colonial terror, intended to permanently crush the localised spirit of revolt.



A contemporary engraving depicting a scene from the Uprising of 1857 involving the Bengal Army.

COURTESY: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

THE CHITTAGONG UPRISING: Prisons, princes, and light

As the autumn of 1857 approached, the latent tensions in the eastern extremities of the province finally fractured into open military rebellion. Chittagong, a vital port city handling extensive maritime trade across Southeast Asia, was garrisoned by the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th companies of the 34th Bengal Native Infantry. The remaining seven companies of this same regiment had already been ignominiously disbanded at Barrackpore following the iconic defiance of Mangal Pandey.

Initially, the detachments in Chittagong engaged in a complex performance of fidelity, submitting petitions to the Governor-General of India emphasising their loyalty and distancing themselves from their disgraced brethren. However, beneath this veneer of compliance, a potent undercurrent of rebellion was brewing, heavily influenced by rumours of forced religious conversions and continuous correspondence with mutineers in the North-Western Provinces of India. A pensioned Jamadar named Thakur Bax was suspected of maintaining close contact with the sepoy's, fanning the flames of insurrection.

On the night of November 18, 1857, following a large feast at which final tactical manoeuvres were solidified, the sepoy's in Chittagong initiated a full-scale mutiny. Their actions meticulously followed the established patterns of the popular uprisings. They plundered the district treasury, securing roughly three hundred thousand rupees, set their own military lines on fire, blew up the ammunition magazines, and, critically, broke open the colonial jail to release the prisoners. The systematic targeting of prisons during the rebellion was not merely a pragmatic effort to recruit labour or create chaos. Prisons were viscerally despised as

the ultimate architectural embodiments of colonial intrusion, cultural transgression, and state hegemony. By dismantling the jail, the Chittagong mutineers were symbolically dismantling the authority of the East India Company. Interestingly, the mutiny in Chittagong was virtually bloodless in terms of European casualties, focusing instead on the expropriation of state resources and the destruction of colonial infrastructure.

Following the outbreak, the mutineers embarked on a strategic retreat into the independent princely state of Tripura, seeking to bypass colonial strongholds and eventually link up with rebel forces in northern India. Their movement through the dense topography of the North-East Frontier revealed the extent of covert indigenous support for the rebellion. Colonial intelligence grudgingly acknowledged that more than 1,200 local civilians assisted the mutineers by cutting jungle paths and procuring provisions.

Furthermore, the mutineers forged formidable alliances with indigenous political factions. They were joined by rebel princes of the Manipur royal family, notably Narendrajit Singh, who broke out of colonial detention in Cachar to align his followers with the sepoy's. The rebels also received critical logistical support from the Kookie hill tribes. This complex coalition of Hindustani sepoy's, Manipuri royalty, and indigenous tribesmen engaged in a fierce three-hour firefight with British forces at present-day Jiribam in Manipur. Although the sepoy's were ultimately defeated and scattered into the forests, with many subsequently captured and later executed, the Chittagong outbreak proved that the rebellion in the periphery was capable of forging powerful cross-cultural anti-colonial alliances. The Chittagong uprising also had a somewhat unanticipated impact on Dhaka.

BATTLE OF LAL BAGH: The Dhaka Uprising

News of the Chittagong mutiny traversed the regional communication networks with astonishing speed, reaching the administrative hub of Dhaka on November 21, 1857. Dhaka was garrisoned by two companies of the 73rd Native Infantry, numbering approximately 180 men,

the surrender of arms, the sepoy's initiated a ferocious defensive action. As the sailors attempted to advance through a broken wall near the southern gateway, a volley of musket fire tore through their ranks. One sailor was instantly shot dead by a sentry, and the sepoy's quickly positioned their six-pounder guns in front of the Bibi Pari tomb to command the entrance. The engagement at Lal Bagh rapidly escalated into a brutal close-quarters battle. The sepoy's utilised the fort's architectural elevation, the hospital buildings, and the cover of the Mughal structures to sustain a heavy barrage against the European forces. However, after a prolonged half-hour firefight, the superior discipline and concentrated firepower of the Naval Brigade overwhelmed the defenders. The sepoy's were driven from their barracks, resulting in a devastating loss of life.

Once the sepoy's were overpowered, the surviving soldiers broke into small detached parties and fled in various directions, with some attempting to march towards Jalpaiguri and others fleeing through Mymensingh towards the Bhutanese border. The ten sepoy's captured in the immediate aftermath were subjected to summary military tribunals and publicly hanged. The Battle of Dhaka eradicated the immediate military danger, but it entrenched a lingering and pervasive paranoia among the European populace, who reportedly slept with loaded revolvers under their pillows for months afterwards. The pre-emptive strike at Lal Bagh, while successful from a colonial military perspective, underscored the sheer desperation and fragility of British authority in Eastern Bengal during the winter of 1857.

CONCLUSION: Reclaiming the 'periphery'

The events of 1857 in Eastern Bengal remind us that this subcontinental seismic uprising was not a monolithic event, but rather a profoundly complex and multi-layered movement. The nature and character of the rebellion varied significantly depending on the specificities of each region. Unlike in Awadh, where soldiers shared deep agrarian and social ties with the local peasantry, the sepoy's stationed in Bengal largely operated in a demographic vacuum. This absence of formal attachment to the land and the rural population meant that their mutiny did not easily transcend into a widespread mass civil rebellion within the lower provinces themselves.

However, this regional differentiation does not mean that Eastern Bengal was isolated from the broader conflagration. In fact, the uprisings in places such as Chittagong and Dhaka were deeply interconnected with the events unfolding in the north-central Gangetic heartland. The sepoy's in the east followed a strikingly similar pattern of anti-colonial resistance: plundering state treasuries, severing telegraph lines, burning colonial infrastructure, and dismantling the ultimate symbols of British authority—the prisons. Their primary goal after mutinying was almost always to march westwards and reinforce the larger resistance in their homelands.

From the shadows of the Jessore conspiracy, where native militias plotted the overthrow of the local treasury, to the flames of the Chittagong uprising, where sepoy's aligned with Manipuri royalty and Kookie tribes to challenge colonial hegemony, the region was actively engaged in resistance against the British state. The fierce Battle of Lal Bagh in Dhaka stands as a testament to the heavy price paid by those who rose against the empire in the east.

Ultimately, while the armed phase of the rebellion in Eastern Bengal was brutally suppressed, the ideological shockwaves of 1857 fundamentally transformed the Bengali intelligentsia. Forced to navigate between their abhorrence of violence and their dawning realisation of colonial economic exploitation, they laid the intellectual groundwork for the modern Indian nationalist movement. The rebellion of 1857 was thus a highly networked crisis in which regional actions in the periphery constantly fed into the core, and vice versa. Eastern Bengal was not merely a quiet bystander; it was a crucial interconnected theatre that distinctly shaped the broader challenge to British imperial rule in the subcontinent.

Niladri Chatterjee is a Senior Lecturer and Researcher in the Department of Cultural Sciences at Linnaeus University. His ORCID is 0000-0002-6808-666X, and he can be reached at niladri.chatterjee@lnu.se.



It's a very blessed feeling for me because I know it's my debut match and I performed really well for my country. And especially when I was going for a bat, so I was a little bit nervous at that time but I performed very well for my team... ..I'm a very calm guy, so I just do my normal celebration.

Pakistan debutant Awaiz Azan after century



Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed set the tone for the day with a fiery spell in the morning session, removing centurion Azan Awaiz and Shan Masood and cornering Pakistan in their first innings of the first Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. (Inset) However, it was Mehidy Hasan Miraz's 14th five-wicket haul which helped bundle out the visitors and eventually helped the hosts to a 34-run lead at the end of the third day's play. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

SCORES IN BRIEF

1st Test, Day 3
Bangladesh 1st innings 413 all out, and 2nd innings: 7 for no loss
Pakistan 1st innings 386 all out (Awaiz 103, Fazal 60, Salman 58, Rizwan 59; Miraz 5-102, Taskin 2-70, Taijul 2-46)



Taj Nehar the only surprise in Women's WC squad

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board on Sunday announced a 15-member squad for the upcoming ICC Women's T20 World Cup, with the team targeting at least three wins in the tournament scheduled to be held in England and Wales from June 12.

Bangladesh made one change from the squad that featured in the recent three-match WT20I series against Sri Lanka at home, recalling top-order batter Taj Nehar in place of Sharmin Sultana.

Taj Nehar's inclusion came as a surprise, given she has managed only 44 runs in eight WT20Is and last played for the national side in January 2025.

The same team will also compete in a tri-series involving Scotland and the Netherlands in Edinburgh before travelling to Loughborough for the World Cup warm-up matches. Bangladesh are scheduled to leave for Edinburgh on May 25.

Placed in Group A alongside Australia, India, Pakistan, the Netherlands and South Africa, Bangladesh will begin their World Cup campaign against the Netherlands on June 14 at Edgbaston.



SQUAD: Joty (C), Nahida (VC), Supta, Sobhana, Shorna, Ritu, Rabeya, Fahima, Trisna, Marufa, Maghla, Sultana, Dilara, Juairiya, Taj Nehar.

Tigers bounce back with Taskin, Miraz in sync

ABDULLAH AL MEHIDI

Pakistan batter Imam-ul-Haq remarked after Day 2 of the first Test against Bangladesh that "the beauty of Tests is how there always remains a chance to bounce back."

At the end of Day 3 yesterday, Mehidy Hasan Miraz echoed that sentiment after helping Bangladesh wrest back control with his 14th Test fiver, combining brilliantly with pacer Taskin Ahmed.

Pakistan had raced to 179 for one in reply to Bangladesh's first-innings 413 after dominating Day 2. But by stumps on Day 3, Bangladesh had bundled the visitors out for 386 and moved to seven without loss in their second innings, holding a 34-run lead.

Miraz may have claimed the lion's share of wickets, but it was Taskin's incisive morning spell that shifted the momentum, even after Pakistan had continued their dominance in the opening session.

Azan Awaiz and Abdullah Fazal resumed confidently, extending Pakistan's solid third-wicket stand. Nahid Rana's opening burst showed that pace alone would not be enough to force a breakthrough. Taskin was introduced in the seventh over of the day and showed intent right away, as Fazal edged his

first delivery between wicketkeeper and slip.

Yet that was only the beginning of what proved to be his most impactful spell of the Test.

"I would love to bowl at 145 kph or more, but it is not my time to do that anymore. I do not need it. 138-140 is good enough for me," Taskin had told this reporter ahead of the series.

As it turned out, he needed even less.

After struggling with injuries in recent months, the Pakistan Tests were Taskin's own call, and on Day 3 he made that decision count. Having sprayed the ball around on the green Mirpur surface a day earlier, he adapted smartly, sacrificing express pace for control.

Most of his deliveries hovered in the 127-130 kph range. Instead of speed, he relied on disciplined lengths, extracting bounce and seam movement from the grassy track.

Azan, already on a hundred on his debut and looking set for a much bigger score, fell victim to Taskin's subtle setup. The first ball of Taskin's second over was back of a length and angled across, which Azan defended. The next came tighter into the body, drawing a

slight inside edge to mid-on. A third delivery, again on a tighter line, pushed him further back.

Then came the trap. Taskin went slightly wider, tempting Azan into a loose drive, and Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto completed the catch at first slip.

During that opening spell, Taskin and Miraz conceded just 27 runs in 13 overs. Taskin soon removed Pakistan skipper Shan Masood, while Miraz struck twice. Taskin could have had Salman Agha too, but a no-ball spared the batter. Even so, Pakistan collapsed from 210 for one to 230 for five during that decisive partnership.

Miraz then capitalised on the pressure created by Taskin, claiming five for 102 on a surface offering little turn and proving his own adaptability.

"It made things much easier for me when he [Taskin] picked up those two wickets. Our partnership was vital. If one end wasn't kept tight and runs were flowing freely, the batsmen would just look to rotate the strike comfortably. Because Taskin kept his end incredibly tight, the batsmen tried to attack me to score runs, and that is exactly how they ended up getting out."

A month to go, World Cup unease lingers

AFP, Los Angeles

Just a month left before the 2026 FIFA World Cup begins, but as anticipation builds for football's grandest stage, anxiety is proving an equally dominant emotion.

Despite FIFA president Gianni Infantino insisting it is "very difficult to find something negative" about the upcoming tournament, the buildup to the 23rd edition of the World Cup has been clouded by soaring ticket prices, geopolitical tensions and uncertainty surrounding Iran's participation.

A record 48 teams and millions of fans are set to descend on the United States, Canada and Mexico for the first-ever World Cup co-hosted by three nations. The expanded, six-week spectacle will kick off at Mexico City's iconic Estadio Azteca on June 11 before culminating in the July 19 final at New Jersey's MetLife Stadium.

Yet even before a ball has been kicked, the tournament risks being overshadowed by growing concerns over accessibility and security.

Infantino insists the pre-tournament unease is overblown, dismissing the tide of downbeat headlines as "negative press."

Many fans, however, may disagree.

'Extortionate' ticket prices

The sharp rise in ticket prices has sparked perhaps the biggest backlash of the tournament's buildup, with many supporters fearing they are being priced



PHOTO: AI GENERATED

out of football's biggest celebration.

Fan group Football Supporters Europe (FSE) has condemned FIFA's pricing structure as "extortionate" and a "monumental betrayal," with tickets for some marquee matches soaring far beyond the reach of ordinary fans.

The most expensive ticket for the 2022 World Cup final in Qatar cost around \$1,600 at face value. For the 2026 final, FIFA's top-priced ticket now stands at a staggering \$32,970.

Infantino has defended the pricing, pointing to the commercial realities of hosting the tournament in the United States.

"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," he said.

FIFA says demand remains unprecedented, reporting more than 500 million ticket requests – ten times the combined total for the 2018 and 2022 tournaments.

Yet despite claims of overwhelming demand, seats for several matches, including the United States' opening game against Paraguay in Los Angeles on June 12, remain available on resale platforms.

Even US President Donald Trump

appeared stunned by the prices.

"I did not know that number," Trump told the New York Post after learning tickets for the USA-Paraguay clash were selling for around \$1,000. "I would certainly like to be there, but I wouldn't pay it either, to be honest with you."

War and uncertainty

Beyond ticket concerns, geopolitical tensions have added another layer of unease.

The ongoing conflict involving Iran has cast doubt over what should be one of football's most unifying occasions, with questions raised over security and logistics ahead of the tournament.

Iran, however, remains set to participate, with Infantino insisting the team will play all three of its group-stage matches in the United States as scheduled.

FIFA will hope those anxieties fade once the action begins and football takes center stage.

With defending champions Argentina led by Lionel Messi among the favorites alongside Spain, France and England, and debutants such as Curacao and Cape Verde ready for history, the promise of another unforgettable World Cup remains intact.

But as the final countdown begins, excitement is sharing the stage with apprehension – and FIFA's biggest challenge may be ensuring the world can focus solely on football.

Fortis, Police set for AFC club licences

SPORTS REPORTER

Fortis FC and Bangladesh Police FC are ahead in the race to represent Bangladesh in the upcoming AFC Challenge League for the first time, regardless of their final standings in the ongoing Bangladesh Football League.

Usually, the BFL champions receive an indirect slot in the AFC Challenge League, subject to obtaining the AFC club licence. However, Bashundhara Kings and Abahani – currently locked in the title race with only two rounds remaining – are facing complications after FIFA imposed registration bans on the two clubs.

A source within the Bangladesh Football Federation said the federation's First Instance Body (FIB), responsible for assessing club licensing criteria, recommended Fortis FC and Police FC for AFC club licences during Saturday's meeting. Six other clubs, including Abahani and Kings, reportedly failed to meet all requirements.

Abahani and Kings, however, will have until May 25 to appeal before the AFC makes its final decision on May 31.

"We have sought time until June to fulfil all club licensing conditions, especially clearing unpaid wages of foreign players to lift the FIFA registration ban," Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu told The Daily Star.

No official from Bashundhara Kings was available for comment regarding the matter.

Fortis FC manager Rashedul Islam said the club remained optimistic about securing the licence.

"We have fulfilled all the requirements for club licensing. If we can finish among the top two, we are interested in playing the AFC Challenge League," he said.

Eight clubs expressed interest in obtaining AFC club licences before the December 28 deadline. The licensing process officially began on January 1, with March 31 set as the deadline for document submission.

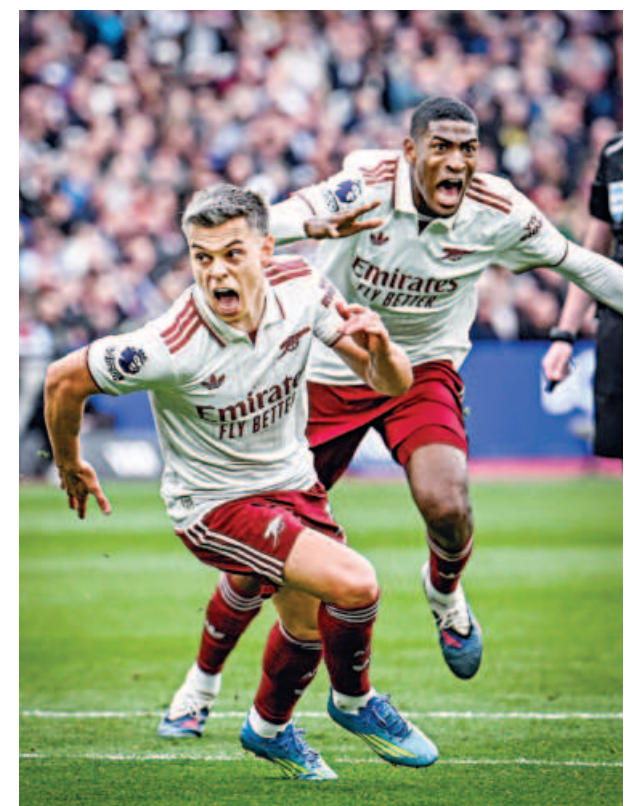


The youngest mastermind

The record for the youngest coach to win a World Cup belongs to Uruguay's Alberto Suppici. In 1930, under his leadership, hosts Uruguay became champions by defeating Argentina 4-2 in the final of the very first World Cup. At that time, the coach – famously known as "The Professor" – was just 31 years old.



****Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: Redemption of 'The Phenomenon'**



Arsenal edged closer to a first Premier League title in 22 years with a dramatic 1-0 win away to West Ham yesterday. Leandro Trossard's 83rd-minute strike restored Arsenal's five-point lead over second-placed Manchester City, who remain on 74 points with a game in hand. Arsenal needed a huge slice of luck in stoppage time as West Ham had a late equaliser ruled out by VAR for a foul on goalkeeper David Raya before Callum Wilson scored. PHOTO: FACEBOOK

BNP moves to counter 'anti-reform' portrayal

Plans month-long programme to reach public directly

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP has decided to launch a month-long programme to counter what it says is the opposition's misleading portrayal of the party as anti-reform, as well as criticism over the government's handling of the measles outbreak.

Party sources said the programme will include processions, street rallies, courtyard meetings, leaflet distribution, exchange-of-view sessions, and direct public engagement at the district, city, upazila, and union levels.

A senior BNP leader, seeking anonymity, said, "People are not fully aware of these issues, which is why the opposition has been able to mislead them. Through these campaigns, our grassroots leaders will present the facts directly to the public."

BNP Joint Secretary General Syed Emran Saleh Prince said letters have already been sent to district-level units,

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Discarded plastic bottles are brought to a recycling factory in Chattogram city's Bakalia area, where they are cut into small pieces, washed, and dried into flakes before being packed and exported abroad. This recycling process helps reduce pollution and has also created employment for people.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Punish those who attacked The Daily Star, Prothom Alo

Speakers urge govt at Star 35yr celebrations in Barishal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

The attacks on The Daily Star and Prothom Alo were attacks on independent journalism itself, speakers said at The Daily Star's 35th anniversary celebration in Barishal yesterday.

Speaking at the event, Akon Quddusur Rahman, administrator of the Barishal District Council and BNP assistant organising secretary for Barishal division, said attacks on journalists who risked their lives to inform the public during the country's political turmoil were barbaric and uncivilised.

"We have witnessed the heinous attacks on the offices of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo.... We do not want such incidents to be repeated," he said at the event held at the Zilla Shilpakala Academy auditorium.

He added that political parties often try to suppress journalism when reports go against them, and stressed the need for both ethical journalism and ethical governance.

Referring to media laws, Akon said civil society members and journalists had strongly opposed the ICT Act when the BNP was in power and the Awami League was in opposition.

"But after coming to power, instead of liberalising the law as promised, the Awami League introduced the Digital Security Act by restructuring parts of the ICT Act.... They

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Govt to amend laws if needed to curb mob violence

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said the government would amend laws or enact new ones if necessary to curb mob violence, acknowledging that the existing legal framework is insufficient to fully address "mob culture".

He made the remarks while speaking as a special guest at the Prime Minister's Special Welfare Meeting organised at the Bangladesh Police Auditorium in Dhaka's Rajarbagh as part of Police Week 2026.

He said the government had spoken about the issue earlier as well and have been taking action within the scope of existing laws as much as possible.

"However, if legal reforms or amendments are needed, we will do that," the home minister said, requesting the home secretary and the inspector general of police to remind him about the matter later.

"Enactment is necessary to address mob culture separately," he said. "It has not been fully possible to do that with the existing laws," the minister added.

The minister said that a special committee has already been formed to draft a modern legal framework to curb gambling, online gambling, and illegal money transfers. This committee will prepare a draft law incorporating provisions for cybercrime and money laundering.

"The nature of crime has changed in the world of the internet," Salahuddin said. "It is no longer possible to operate with old laws."

Referring to law and order, he said the situation had visibly improved over the past two months and that drives

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Mob beats three dead in Kaliakair

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Three people were beaten to death by a mob on suspicions of cattle theft in Gazipur's Kaliakair early yesterday.

During the incident, a pickup used by the victims was also set on fire.

The three are Krishan, 46, of Sylhet's Ghasitola area; Azharul Islam, 36, of Gazipur's Sreepur, and Md Selim, 38, of Dhaka's Mirpur area, said police.

Of them, Azharul and Selim had been accused of multiple robbery and theft cases in the past, said Shahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kaliakair Police Station.

Quoting witnesses, police said a suspected gang of cattle thieves was passing through the Bagchala Bazar area in a pickup around 2:00am.

Locals then chased the suspects, who were eventually caught and beaten by the mob. Their vehicle was set alight, said Robiul Islam, inspector (operations) of Kaliakair Police Station.

On information, police went to the spot and

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LOCAL ELECTIONS IN BRITAIN

British-Bangladeshis shine in London council races

BULBUL HASAN, from London

The just-concluded local elections in Britain have shaken the UK's political landscape, weakening the ruling Labour Party, fuelling the rise of the right-wing Reform UK, and exposing growing public frustration with the traditional two-party system. But amid the national political upheaval, East London told a different story – one of rising British-Bangladeshi political influence, confidence, and representation.

Across four East London boroughs, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Redbridge and Barking and Dagenham, around 80 councillors of Bangladeshi origin were elected, according to community estimates. Nearly half of them, 38 councillors, came from Tower Hamlets alone, underlining the borough's status as the political heartland of Britain's Bangladeshi community.

Bangladeshi-origin candidates also secured victories in Camden, Croydon, Brent, Ealing, and Birmingham, reflecting the diaspora's widening political footprint across England.

This year's elections also saw noticeably higher community engagement. Local activists and campaigners said more Bangladeshi-origin candidates stood for office than in previous



Lutfur Rahman Forhad Hussain

Around 80 British-Bangladeshi councillors elected in East London boroughs

Lutfur Rahman wins Tower Hamlets mayoralty again

Labour's Forhad Hussain captures Newham mayoralty

Diaspora politics shaped by local concerns

elections, while turnout in several wards with large Bangladeshi populations increased significantly.

At the centre of this East London story were two mayoral victories that carried both symbolic and political significance.

In Tower Hamlets, Lutfur

Rahman secured a fourth term as executive mayor, once again defeating Labour in one of its traditional strongholds. In neighbouring Newham, Labour's Forhad Hussain won the mayoralty, becoming one of the first British Bangladeshis to lead a major London borough under the banner of a mainstream political party.

Together, the results illustrated two parallel paths of British-Bangladeshi political success: one built outside the traditional party system, the other rising through it.

Lutfur's political journey has become inseparable from the story of East London's Bangladeshi electorate itself.

He first entered politics through Labour, winning council seats in 2002 and 2006. But his defining moment came in 2010 when Labour withdrew his candidacy for Tower Hamlets mayor shortly before the election. Lutfur left the party, ran as an independent, and defeated Labour candidate Helal Abbas by more than 7,000 votes.

Since then, he has never lost a mayoral race in Tower Hamlets. Official council figures show Lutfur got 35,679 votes in this year's election, defeating Labour's Sirajul Islam, who secured 19,454 votes.

His Aspire Party also tightened its grip on the borough council,

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Jamaat MP asks finance ministry not to merge SIBL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Syed Zainul Abedin has urged the government not to merge Social Islami Bank PLC (SIBL) with other troubled lenders and to keep it outside the Bank Resolution Scheme.

In a letter to the finance ministry on April 12, Zainul alleged that SIBL was forcibly taken over by the S Alam Group in 2017 with political backing.

He said the bank had been one of the strongest Islamic banks before the takeover, paying 20 percent dividends for four consecutive years and even securing approval to open a branch in Makkah.

He criticised the Bangladesh Bank for installing independent directors into the SIBL board after the 2024 political changeover.

These directors lacked banking experience, which worsened the bank's condition despite liquidity support, the MP alleged.

Zainul argued that placing SIBL under the Bank Resolution Scheme

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Car bomb kills 15 cops in Pakistan

Officials say militants used small drones, looted weapons

AFP, Peshawar

Militants detonated a car bomb at a checkpoint in northwestern Pakistan and opened fire on police, killing at least 15 and wounding three, officials said yesterday.

"Last night in the Fateh Khel area of Bannu, a suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a police checkpoint, after which multiple militants entered the post," Bannu police official Muhammad Sajjad Khan told AFP.

He said that 15 officers were confirmed dead, the latest attack in the border province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during a wave of militancy that has strained ties between Islamabad and Kabul.

Gunmen stormed the police checkpoint after the car blast, opening fire, according to officials who said they also used small drones in the attack.

"During the assault, the militants used quadcopters along with heavy weaponry," a senior administrative official in Bannu told AFP on condition of anonymity. He said more than 100 militants took part in the attack.

"In addition, while retreating, the attackers took police personnel and weapons from the station with them," he added.

Bannu has been gripped in recent years by militant activity that has grown across Pakistan's border regions.

The Taliban government in Kabul denies Pakistan's accusations that Afghan territory is a safe harbour for militants, but the frosty relationship has spiralled into deadly armed conflict, including Pakistani airstrikes on cities in Afghanistan in recent months.



Mourners react during the funeral of people killed in an Israeli strike in Saksakiyeh, in Haret Saida, Sidon district, Lebanon yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Joseph Vijay sworn in as Tamil Nadu chief minister



AFP, Chennai

Indian film star C Joseph Vijay was sworn in as chief minister of Tamil Nadu state yesterday after his new party brokered a coalition in the southern industrial hub.

The swearing-in ceremony followed days of high drama in the state capital Chennai, where Vijay's fledgling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) party initially struggled to secure support from smaller parties after state elections.