

Expedite justice in all child abuse cases

Swift verdict in Ramisa rape-murder case should not be a one-off instance

The verdict in the brutal rape and murder of eight-year-old Ramisa Akter, delivered within 19 days of the incident, has undoubtedly set a judicial record in Bangladesh, where most cases of violence against women and children take an average of four years to be resolved. On Sunday, the Dhaka Metropolitan Children Violence Suppression Tribunal sentenced the convicts, Sohel Rana and Swapna Khatun, to death and fined them, with the money payable to the victim's legal heirs. While the sentencing provided some closure to Ramisa's family, the judge's remarks during verdict delivery brought to the fore an uncomfortable truth about our legal and justice system: it is the inefficiency and delay within the system that have failed hundreds of other child victims like Ramisa.

The special tribunal, which delivered the verdict in four working days after the case went to trial, is currently burdened with more than 1,800 pending cases of violence against children, sexual and physical abuse, and other such crimes. There have been instances of decades-long wait for justice, where child rape survivors have grown into adults, spent years in safe homes, yet justice has remained elusive. Often caused by legal loopholes, weak investigations, absent witnesses, victim and witness intimidation, and overburdened prosecution systems, such delays embolden perpetrators. As a result, even the death penalty for rape, introduced in 2020, has not proven a strong enough deterrent against crimes targeting women and children. As evident in data compiled by Ain O Salish Kendra, at least 40 girls aged 7-12 years were raped in just the first four months of 2026. In 2025, 148 girls in the same age group were raped, 63 in 2024, and 58 in 2023.

This epidemic of violence against children cannot be addressed through a single instance of swift justice. The Asiya rape and murder case in 2025, which sparked nationwide outrage and was disposed of by the trial court within 73 days of the case being filed, illustrates this point. Numerous rape and murder cases have since been filed with the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal, but how many have been disposed of within the 90-day timeline set by the revised law?

Moreover, the legal process does not end at the trial court. Convicts have the right to appeal, and High Court confirmation is required in death penalty cases. Even in Asiya's case, the sentence of perpetrator Hitu Sheikh has not been carried out more than a year after the trial court verdict, as the mandatory death reference remains pending before the High Court. In this context, we welcome the chief justice's decision to establish a dedicated High Court bench to hear death references and appeals in cases involving crimes against women and children. However, a child should not have to lose their life or childhood, and spark nationwide outrage, for the justice system to function properly. From investigation to trial, the gaps within this legal framework must be addressed so that the impunity created by delayed justice is eliminated.

Prepare for the rising heat

Govt must act to protect lives and livelihoods

The temperature in Bangladesh is rising at an alarming rate. According to an analysis by this daily using data from the World Bank's Climate Change Knowledge Portal and the Lancet Countdown, the number of days each year when the heat feels unsafe for the human body has nearly tripled—from 46 days in 2000 to 120 days in 2024. Bangladesh Meteorological Department's data also show how intense and widespread the heat has become, with heatwaves affecting up to 40 districts on the same day (June 2) this year. The situation is made worse by high humidity, which prevents the body from cooling itself and makes the weather feel much hotter than it actually is. On some days in Dhaka, 35 degrees Celsius can feel closer to 45 degrees Celsius, which is deeply concerning.

The country now ranks fourth in the world for the number of days with a heat index above 35 degrees Celsius, behind only three Gulf countries known for their desert climates. Most scientific research attributes this dramatic rise primarily to human-induced climate change. Studies suggest that 60 percent of the heatwaves recorded in Bangladesh between 2020 and 2024 would not have occurred without climate change. The problem is being worsened by unplanned urbanisation, unchecked industrialisation, shrinking green spaces, and rapid deforestation. Cities like Dhaka have become heat islands where concrete and dense construction trap heat, while the continued loss of forest cover is weakening one of our strongest natural defences against rising temperatures.

Heat exposure is linked to rising mortality, worsening physical and mental health, and declining productivity. According to reports, heat-related illness and lost productivity cost Bangladesh up to \$1.78 billion in 2024 alone. Agricultural workers, construction labourers, transport workers, and others who work outdoors are among the hardest hit. For many daily wage earners, extreme heat means fewer working hours and less income. In a country where millions of families already face financial hardship, these losses threaten livelihoods, food security, and overall well-being.

Under the circumstances, the government must treat rising heat as a major public health and economic challenge and develop a comprehensive heat action plan. This should include early warning systems, public awareness campaigns, heat health monitoring, and emergency response measures. Hospitals must be prepared to deal with heat-related illnesses, while outdoor workers should have access to drinking water, shaded rest areas, and flexible working hours during peak heat. The government should also expand green spaces, protect water bodies, strengthen climate-resilient infrastructure, and stop further deforestation. Climate adaptation strategies must focus on vulnerable communities, particularly low-income households and outdoor workers. As extreme heat becomes more common, our response must prioritise those most at risk.

How the FY27 budget can bridge our climate finance gap



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Bangladesh's development trajectory has increasingly been shaped by climate change impacts, putting growing pressure on how public finance is allocated and utilised to deliver sustainable outcomes. The country is considered one of the most climate-vulnerable in the world and has regularly been ranked among the top in the global Climate Risk Index, including 7th in 2021 and 13th in 2025 (long-term). Climate change impacts are estimated to cause Bangladesh an average annual loss of around \$3 billion, equivalent to nearly one to two percent of its GDP, creating a growing economic burden on the country's overall growth and development.

Over the past several decades, governments and state administrations in the country have consistently demonstrated their commitment to environmental protection and climate action through various policies, strategies, and budgetary measures, designating climate change as a shared national priority despite broader political divisions. However, whether the current climate-related public financing is proportionate to the country's high level of vulnerability, and adequately aligned with its most critical adaptation and resilience needs, remains a critical question. Evidence shows that existing resources remain far below actual requirements, continue to rely on domestic public financing, and often struggle with implementation weaknesses, institutional inefficiencies and inadequate sectoral prioritisation, which are critical challenges to delivering effective outcomes.

The new government, which assumed office in February 2026, has expressed strong commitment to environmental protection and climate action in its election manifesto and has made a number of pledges such as renewable energy expansion, large-scale tree planting, flood protection, river restoration, climate-smart agriculture, and broader sustainable development initiatives, which are highly relevant within the country's climate and environmental policy context. As its first fiscal plan,

the national budget for FY2026-27 will therefore be an important opportunity to translate these political commitments into actionable measures. In this context, several climate financing priorities deserve closer attention.

Funding for climate action has grown steadily in recent years,



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

although the overall funding remains modest relative to the scale of need. According to data from the finance ministry, climate-related public expenditure increased from Tk 24,226 crore in FY2020-21 to over Tk 42,206 crore in FY2024-25, reflecting growing government attention to the crisis. However, spending on climate action has remained below one percent of GDP in the last six fiscal years (including the outgoing one), which is insufficient compared to the estimated annual budget need of around three percent of GDP. This gap becomes more evident when viewed against the country's long-term adaptation needs. The National Adaptation Plan (2023-2050), which serves as the country's principal adaptation framework, estimates total adaptation requirements at around \$230 billion

by 2050, with an annual need of \$8.5 billion. In contrast, the current annual climate-related finance flows are estimated at around \$2-3 billion only, indicating a substantial gap between required investments and available resources. This growing mismatch between financing needs and available resources highlights the importance of adopting a more responsive and adequate climate finance arrangement in the upcoming national budget.

Bangladesh's climate finance structure remains heavily dependent on domestic public resources due to the limited scale of international climate finance inflows. Recent estimates reveal that the average annual climate finance utilisation stands at around \$2.76 billion, of which international finance accounts for only about

financing in Bangladesh has also been challenged by persistent weaknesses in the implementation of development projects. The Annual Development Programme (ADP) implementation rate declined to only 68 percent in FY2024-25, the lowest in 49 years. Similarly, ADP implementation remained at just over 36 percent in the first nine months of FY2025-26, indicating continued weaknesses in project execution capacity in recent years. These trends suggest that increasing climate-related allocations alone will not be sufficient without ensuring implementation efficiency, strengthening coordination, and effective accountability mechanisms for the timely and high-quality delivery of development projects.

Another important concern for the upcoming budget is the limited prioritisation of research, innovation and knowledge management within the broader climate change agenda. Although the overall climate allocations have increased over the years, investment in research and knowledge systems has gradually declined. The share of climate-related allocations dedicated to research and knowledge management declined significantly from around 5.98 percent in FY2015-16 to only 2.47 percent in FY2024-25, despite their significance in long-term adaptation planning, innovation, and evidence-based policymaking. Strengthening investment in climate research and knowledge systems should, therefore, receive greater attention in the upcoming budgetary process.

In conclusion, the FY2026-27 budget should move beyond symbolic climate commitments and place stronger emphasis on increasing climate investment, in line with the country's growing adaptation and resilience demands. At the same time, greater attention is needed to improving access to international climate finance, particularly given Bangladesh's high level of climate vulnerability and widening financing gap. The budgetary process should also emphasise strengthening implementation efficiency, institutional coordination, accountability mechanisms, and the promotion of continuous research, innovation and knowledge management to fortify long-term resilience. As the new administration's first fiscal plan, this budget presents an important opportunity to translate political commitments into a more practical, adequately-financed and implementation-oriented climate finance framework for the country.

Restoring faith in justice system is key to ending mob violence



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It goes without saying that erosion of public trust in Bangladesh's justice system is one of the causes of the surge in the dangerous vigilante culture known as "mob justice," which threatens the very core of social norms. Recently, a disturbing video went viral on social media, showing an alleged drug dealer being beaten by a local crowd of hundreds of people. To the passive scroller, it might look like a perfect punishment for the crime of drug business. But deep down, it is a classic, terrifying symptom of a much broader institutional disease: the breakdown of public faith in the criminal justice system.

When ordinary citizens repeatedly see marked criminals roam around freely, a dangerous consensus forms. People stop believing that the courts will protect them when needed, so they take the law into their own hands. What we are witnessing across the country today is the terrifying rise of this culture of bypassing the due process of law to get "justice" in a shortcut way.

The spike in mob violence did not start out of nowhere. It emerged more prominently during the tenure of the interim government, when public institutions were weaker and law enforcement agencies were struggling to regain their footing due to their

activities during the mass uprising. Amid this fragile transformation, citizens held onto the hope that a democratically elected government would restore law and order, rebuild the police force, and fix the judicial system. However, more than three months into the tenure of the BNP government, that hope is slowly turning into frustration day by day. Despite early promises from the cabinet to prioritise law and order, the administration has largely failed to curtail mob violence effectively.

Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation's media-based monitoring confirms that at least 111 people were killed in mob violence between January and May 2026, with the monthly death toll rising from 21 in January to 32 in May. According to a report by the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), over 60 distinct incidents of mob violence were recorded in May 2026 alone, resulting in dozens of deaths and serious injuries. By failing to send a swift, powerful message that mob violence will not be tolerated, the state has inadvertently allowed these crowds to feel empowered.

The crowd's tendency to rationalise "instant justice" or punishment outside the formal justice system ultimately creates a dangerous culture of parallel justice. Afghanistan's

experience, for example, shows us how the Taliban exploited the weakness, corruption, and inefficiency of state courts to establish their own Sharia-based courts at the local level, presenting them as mechanisms for resolving public disputes. Such alternative systems of justice may initially showcase speed or fairness, but in the long run they pose a serious

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threat to the government's legitimacy, the rule of law, and human rights.

The true danger of mob mentality is that it never stops at local petty crimes. Once a crowd realises it holds the "power" to judge, jury, and execute, the goalpost invariably shifts towards policing people's personal choices, morals, and cultural freedoms. We saw an example of this recently in Brahmanbaria when a local film society organised the screening of

"Banolata Express," a widely successful film certified by the government's Film Certification Board. Yet, under the false allegation that the film promoted "un-Islamic" content, a local right-wing student organisation launched a campaign that forced the venue to cancel the event while the local authorities remained unresponsive. The local MP Rumeen Farhana's stance on this issue is commendable; she protested to uphold the cultural freedom and questioned the intention of this pressure group. She was heavily criticised by the group for her statement later, which is also alarming.

If the government and other socio-political institutions with sway over society do not act immediately, this localised vigilantism may spread like a contagion across the country. The trend of unruly groups using the banner of "mob justice" to dominate others, take personal revenge, or silence cultural expressions may become further normalised. To prevent this slide into anarchy, the government must adopt a clear "zero tolerance for mob" policy. Law enforcement agencies must treat everyone involved in a mob attack as an individual criminal.

Bangladesh already has enough legal provisions to prosecute such incidents of violence. Under the Penal Code, 1860, a violent crowd may be treated as an unlawful assembly or a riot, and Section 149 allows every member of the mob to be held liable for offences committed in pursuit of the group's common object. If a person is beaten to death by the mob, the case may amount to murder under Section 302. Mob justice is clearly a crime against the rule of law, and there is no such thing as "justified" in such violence.