DHAKA SUNDAY OCTOBER 4, 2026



First, they removed people from the voters' list, and now they are not letting us raise our voice.

NEHA BORA, president of All India Students' Association

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



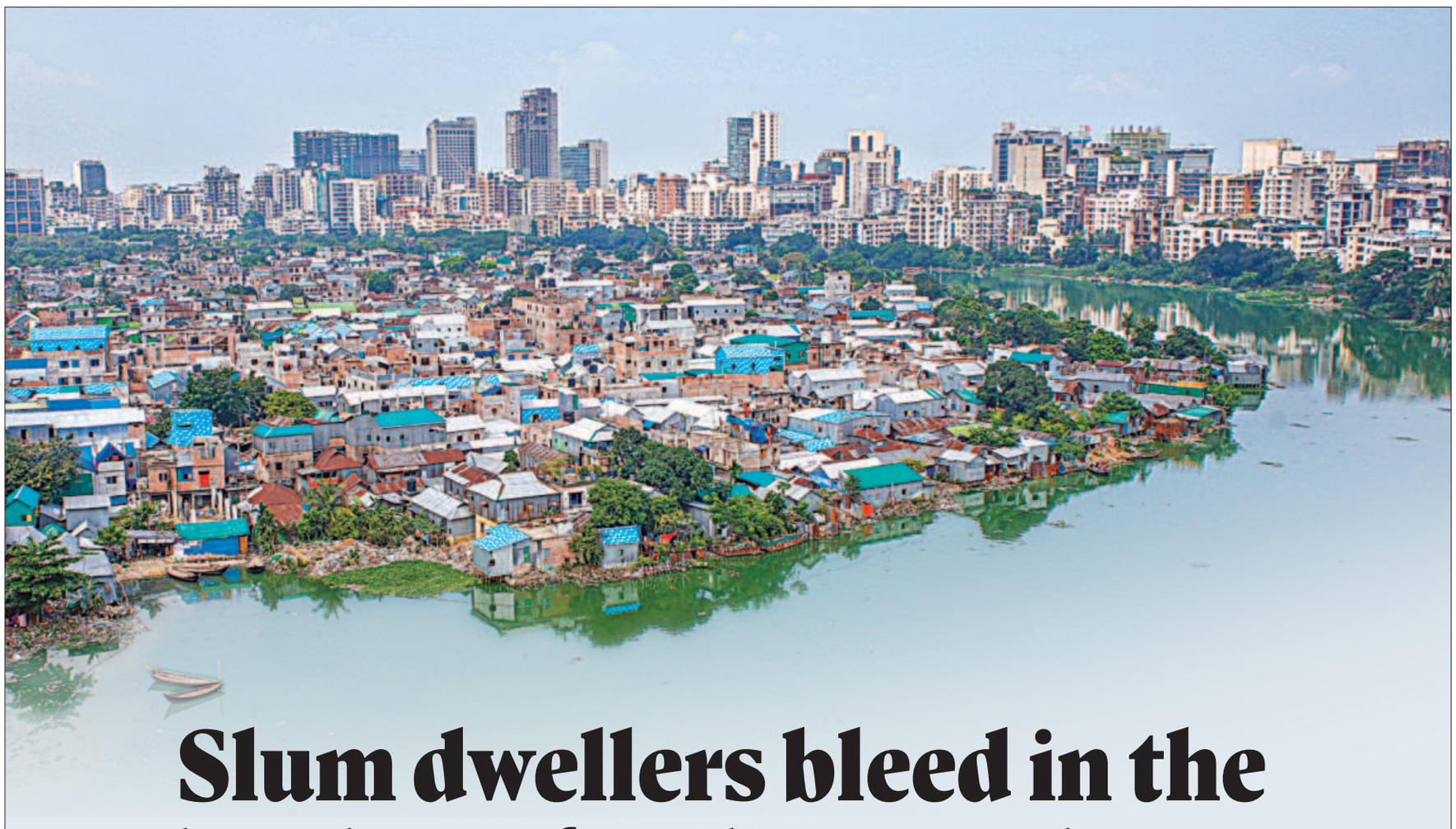
REGD. NO. DA 781 | VOL. XXXVI NO. 249 | ASHWIN 19, 1433 BS | www.thedailystar.net | RABIUS SANI 22, 1448 HIJRI | 16 PAGES: TK 15.00

B1 | BASIC BANK YET TO HEAL FROM BACCHU-ERA DAMAGE

P4 | HISTORIC DARUL ADALAT ON VERGE OF COLLAPSE

P5 | CAN BANGLADESH CAPITALISE ON THE BAY OF BENGAL'S STRATEGIC RISE?

P6 | CTG PORT MUST GET THE TRANSITION RIGHT



Slum dwellers bleed in the clutches of utility syndicates

They pay much more than govt-fixed rates for power, gas, water

SHAMIMA RITA

Jannat Begum, a domestic worker living in Dhaka's Korail slum, pays Tk 600 a month to use a light and a fan in her single-room home. But according to government electricity tariffs, her estimated usage should cost less than Tk 450.

Hers is not an isolated case. In the absence of direct connections, thousands of low-income families in Dhaka's slums depend on unauthorised utility service providers who charge far more than the official rates for electricity, gas and water.

Slum residents allege that syndicates comprising local actors and politically influential people run these systems.

"Governments come and go, but our suffering never ends," Md Johny, a resident of Kalyanpur Pora Basti, told this correspondent.

Architect and urban planner Salma A Shafi said the government lacks a long-term plan for these settlements of low-income people whose numbers are growing.



A view shows the Korail slum in the capital's Mohakhali area, *top*. Illegal power lines dangling overhead that power homes across the settlement, *bottom*.

PHOTO: **RASHED SHUMON**

"As the slum population increases, residents are forced to seek informal means to meet their basic needs at additional costs. Over time, these illegal arrangements become the norm, as there is little oversight by the authorities."

According to city corporation officials, Korail, the country's largest slum, has around 17,000 households. Bhashantek slum has about 5,000 households, while Kalyanpur Pora Basti is home to more than 3,000. Each household has five members on average. All three slums are in areas under Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC).

Between May and July, this correspondent interviewed more than 50 residents of the three slums, people involved in unauthorised utility networks and officials from relevant agencies.

Seeking anonymity, a senior DESCO official said a single main electricity meter in a slum can serve up to 20 households, with power billed at residential tariff rates. Dhaka Electric Supply Company (DESCO) distributes power in the northern parts of Dhaka and Tongi town.

The existing rules, however, do not specify the process through which electricity connections should be provided to households or makeshift structures in slums. As many slum residents lack the documents required for individual connections, electricity is sometimes supplied through shared-meter arrangements involving NGOs or other authorised intermediaries, said the official.

But in many cases, syndicates gain control of these meters through which they illegally supply electricity to slum households, added the official.

Mizanur Rahman, a former member of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), said, "So-called ruling-party members make these arrangements in slums for commercial gain, while many residents depend on them because they provide an easier way to obtain electricity in the absence of legal individual connections."

AHM Shafiquzzaman, president of Consumers Association of Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR THE VIDEO STORY

Transparency, rights key to nation's rise

PM stresses regional ties for shared prosperity at Bay of Bengal talks

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday said the development of a nation required strong institutions, with transparency and accountability, human rights, democratic principles and freedom of expression protected.

"The rule of law must apply equally to every citizen," he said while inaugurating the fifth Bay of Bengal Conversation 2026 at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel.

There, the prime minister also called for deeper regional cooperation in trade, energy, technology, climate and maritime affairs to turn the Bay of Bengal into a region of shared prosperity.

"Let the Bay of Bengal become a region where nations grow together, embrace mutual and reciprocal benefits, and citizens expand meaningful cooperation."

Tarique said Bangladesh's strategic location, ports, waterways and coastal economy offered significant opportunities to connect the country with the wider world through shipping, fisheries, tourism, energy and regional supply chains.

"Regionally, our shared geography should become a shared prosperity," he said, stressing the need for deeper bilateral and multilateral engagement.

Bangladesh could expand cooperation with regional and global partners in trade, energy, education, technology, climate and maritime affairs, he said, adding that the country could open new markets and create more opportunities for young people.

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 2

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

'Big powers using tariffs for bullying'

Prof Rehman Sobhan advises Bangladesh to look to neighbours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



The world's dominant economic powers, led by the United States, are dragging global trade back to the colonial era, using tariffs to "bully" weaker nations, eminent economist Prof Rehman Sobhan has said.

"We are witnessing a return to the colonial model of trade," he said, speaking at a session titled The New International Economic Disorder at Pan Pacific Sonargaon in the capital yesterday during the Bay of Bengal Conversation.

Countries are being "compelled to buy goods not on the marketplace ... but because they are being pressurised by tariff interventions", and "coerced" into investing in the markets of the economic powers, he said.

"To compel people to buy your goods suggests that you are no longer able to produce these competitively," Prof Sobhan said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

IN FOCUS

Give details on errants, 'no more cover-ups'

BNP tells its grassroots

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP high command has instructed grassroots organisers to promptly inform the party's central office if any member in their area faces allegations of criminal activity, rather than conceal the matter or shield the person involved.

District-level leaders have also been asked to verify allegations locally, gather information on members involved in wrongdoing, and cooperate with law enforcement agencies if legal action is required.

"Sometimes grassroots leaders try to hide controversial issues involving influential party figures," said a senior BNP leader, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"In some cases, they also avoid taking action for various reasons. Even if they are unable to act locally, they must at least inform the central leadership," the leader added.

According to party sources, the move aims to identify problems early, before they turn into major controversies that give political opponents an opening to question the government and put pressure on both the party and the government.

District leaders themselves could face action if they knowingly hide allegations or politically protect an accused member, several central BNP leaders said.

The party does not want district committees merely to carry out central decisions, BNP leaders said. It also wants

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Workers without safety gear such as masks and protective clothing load fly ash brought from India by train onto trucks at Khulna's No 4 Ghat yesterday. The open-air operation sends fine dust into the air, polluting the surrounding environment and exposing workers to health risks, including respiratory problems.

PHOTO: **HABIBUR RAHMAN**