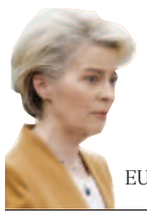
DHAKA MONDAY OCTOBER 12, 2026



"These attacks by Iran's proxies are pushing the region into a spiral of violence. They are destabilizing crucial global transport..."
EU chief **URSULA VON DER LEYEN**

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The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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Md Shahin, *left*, was scheduled to fly to Saudi Arabia yesterday. He and his brother anxiously check a phone at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport for updates. Shahin and many others were unable to travel to KSA after at least eight flights were cancelled following a Houthi missile strike on Riyadh airport.

PHOTO: **RASHED SHUMON**

Visa clock ticks for KSA-bound workers

Nearly 3,000 passengers affected by Riyadh airport closure; migrants facing job deadlines, uncertainty

TASNEEM TAYEB

Having spent Tk 3.5 lakh to secure a job in Saudi Arabia, Mohammad Hasan was all set to leave Bangladesh yesterday afternoon.

"Now I am waiting, not knowing whether I will reach Riyadh before my visa expires on Monday," he told The Daily Star at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka at 3:30pm yesterday.

His predicament reflects the uncertainty facing Bangladeshi migrant workers as the security crisis escalates in Saudi Arabia amid attacks by Yemeni Houthis, disrupting air

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

2 Bangladeshis killed in Riyadh airport strike

24 others injured; Dhaka slams attack

STAR REPORT

Two Bangladeshis were killed and 24 others critically injured in Saturday's Houthi missile strike on Riyadh's international airport.

According to the expatriates' welfare ministry, three of them were undergoing treatment in the intensive care unit at King Abdullah hospital.

The Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh is maintaining contact with hospitals to gather information about the injured and ensure their proper treatment.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Riyadh airport hit by fresh Houthi strike

Fire reported; people hurt

AGENCIES

A fresh Houthi strike hit Riyadh's international airport yesterday, a day after another attack claimed by the Yemeni group killed at least a dozen people, including two Bangladeshis, and forced authorities to suspend operations at the facility.

The Saudi-led coalition in Yemen said an "unidentified projectile" had targeted Riyadh's international airport Terminal 4, causing a fire. An unspecified number of people were injured, the Saudi civil aviation authority said, adding it was still assessing the damage.

The coalition also said Saudi air defences had intercepted a cruise missile in the vicinity of King Khalid International Airport.

The strikes have exposed vulnerabilities in Saudi defence capabilities as the kingdom wages an air campaign against the Houthis to support a ground war in Yemen by the Yemeni government against the Iran-aligned group.

The airport has been closed since Saturday's attack. However, a long-planned international energy conference went ahead in Riyadh as planned.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

BUSINESS AND BEYOND

CAB questions new LPG prices without hearings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) has been setting fuel prices, including liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), without public hearings, raising questions about whether it is protecting consumers' interests.

The issue came up at a discussion organised yesterday by The Daily Star titled "LPG prices: Who is failing the consumer?" at The Daily Star Centre.

The High Court issued a directive on August 25, 2020, requiring BERC to determine LPG prices through public hearings, said M Shamsul Alam, energy adviser to the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

HC directive on Aug 25, 2020, calls for public hearings for LPG prices

BERC chairman says public hearings unnecessary



CAB says BERC fails to investigate LPG supply chain overcharging

Industry insiders say consumers pay 30-40% above govt-set rates

Last hearing held on Apr 12, 2021

BERC held a public hearing on April 12, 2021, but later stopped holding hearings, including for its latest decision on October 4.

Public hearings allow consumers to challenge the costs operators submit for inclusion in regulated prices. At the 2021 hearing, CAB questioned freight charges submitted by operators.

RELATED STORY ON B1

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



2 more push-in attempts foiled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) has foiled alleged attempts by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) to push six people into Bangladesh through the Gangni border in Meherpur and four others through the Kushtia border.

In a press release, the BGB 47 Kushtia Battalion said an attempt was made to push six unidentified people, including two men and four women, into Bangladesh early yesterday through the border area under the Rangmahal Border Outpost.

The BSF's Dighalkandi camp under its 11th Battalion took the six people back inside India's barbed-wire fence around 8:00am.

Lt Col Rashed Kamal Roni, commander of the BGB 47 Kushtia Battalion, said regular patrols had been intensified in the relevant border areas.

Meanwhile, BGB foiled another attempt to push four Indian nationals into Bangladesh along the Kushtia border yesterday.

The incident took place near border pillar 153/9 in the area under the Uday Kishan camp of the BSF, adjacent to the Thotapara BOP under the 47 BGB Battalion.



Protesters react as security personnel detain them during a Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) demonstration demanding the resignation of India's CEC Gyanesh Kumar, near the protest site in New Delhi yesterday. Story on page 12. PHOTO: REUTERS

Rooppur unit-1 begins nuclear fission reaction

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

Unit-1 of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant initiated its first nuclear fission reaction yesterday, marking a major milestone for Bangladesh's first nuclear power project.

The reaction, which begins a self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction, started at around 3:34pm after the plant received regulatory approval, Md Anwar Hossain, secretary of the Ministry of Science and Technology, told The Daily Star.

"For the first time, the commissioning team began the fission reaction at unit-1 today. We successfully started the process while every parameter performed according to design," he said.

The development marks the reactor's first criticality -- the point at which it reaches a stable critical state at minimum thermal power and sustains a nuclear chain reaction for the first time.

Project officials said engineers are closely monitoring reactor parameters, safety systems and control equipment throughout the process. The physical start-up phase, including first criticality, is expected to take about 30 to 40 days, after which power generation will be increased gradually based on test results.

Dr Md Zahedul Hassan, managing director of Nuclear Power Plant Company Bangladesh Ltd, explained that heat produced through nuclear fission would convert water into high-pressure steam, which would drive turbines connected to generators to produce electricity.

BWSA protests cancellation of women's football match

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Women's Sports Association (BWSA) has protested the cancellation of a women's football match in Derai upazila of Sunamganj following alleged threats and intimidation by a small but vocal radical fundamentalist group.

The association also called on the local administration and other stakeholders to ensure that the match is held immediately, with adequate security and dignity.

BWSA president Barrister Sarwat Siraj Shukla made the remarks at a press conference at the association's office in Dhanmondi. General secretary and former South Asian Games gold medallist Sharmin Akter Ratna, Derai sports organiser Rakib Bhuiyan and Swapnachura Club captain Sabana Akhter were also present.

"It is a matter of regret, frustration, alarm and deep concern that this game is being stopped. How is it being stopped? In that region, a small but extremely vocal, loud and reactionary group, afflicted with radical fundamentalism, is campaigning against this game. They exert influence over the local administration, apply pressure, and also threaten and intimidate those who come to play," Shukla said in her opening remarks.

A friendly match between Swapnachura Club and Zara Sporting Club was scheduled for October 5 in Derai. However, the organisers were forced to cancel it a few hours before kick-off following threats from the group, which reportedly described the women footballers as indecent. The local administration also failed to provide the support needed to hold the match.

Shukla warned that such obstruction would not be allowed to continue in what she described as a new democratic journey towards a discrimination-free Bangladesh. She said the incident was particularly concerning at a time when the government was encouraging girls to take up sports through nationwide initiatives such as Notun Kuri Sports, the DC Cup and the Prime Minister's Gold Cup. She also noted that Prime Minister's daughter Zaima Rahman was a former athlete who remained enthusiastic about sports.

Drawing parallels with incidents during the interim period, Shukla cited mob attacks that had halted women's sporting events in Thakurgaon and Faridpur. Describing women's football as a "bright star" of Bangladesh sports, she noted that recent achievements, including the country's lone medal at the Asian Games, had come through girls from remote areas.

"We will not leave any obstruction to any game unchallenged. Wherever girls' sports are obstructed in Bangladesh, the Women's Sports Association will protest, will stand by the girls. Nothing will go unchallenged," Shukla said, adding that the association would submit a memorandum to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the deputy commissioner of Sunamganj and the upazila nirbahi officer of Derai.

Ratna demanded that those responsible for the match's cancellation be identified and brought to justice. She also called for legislation to protect women's sports and ensure punishment for those who attempt to obstruct them.



BWSA holds a press conference in Dhaka yesterday to protest against postponement of the match. PHOTO: STAR

Riyadh airport hit

FROM PAGE 1

In a televised speech yesterday, Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for Saturday's attack and also said the group had attacked the airport in Dammam in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province and two facilities of Saudi oil giant Saudi Aramco.

There was no immediate Saudi confirmation. The Houthis earlier yesterday had renewed their warning to airlines, airport workers, and travellers against using Saudi airports, reports Reuters.

"We urge everyone to take our warnings seriously, and Saudi Arabia bears responsibility for any failed interceptions," the group said.

Saudi Arabia has stepped up its military involvement in Yemen in recent weeks, launching strikes against the Houthis and backing a Yemeni government counteroffensive after the group seized strategic territory along the Red Sea coast last month.

The Houthis said yesterday that Saudi Arabia carried out 124 air strikes in Yemen in the past 24 hours, including the capital Sanaa and the group's stronghold Saada.

Yemen's Houthi-run foreign ministry said that further Saudi military action in Yemen would trigger a stronger response, adding that its actions would be guided by the principle of reciprocity.

"Unless the Saudi enemy stops its aggression and interference in Yemen, worse is yet to come, God willing," the ministry said in statements carried by Houthi-run Al Masirah television.

US President Donald Trump said on Saturday the United States was considering joining Saudi strikes on the Houthis in the conflict, a spillover from the wider war on Iran that the US and Israel launched in February.

The US, Canadian, German and Spanish embassies in Saudi Arabia warned their citizens to avoid the airport. A senior Western diplomat told AFP that several embassies were banning their staff from using the airport "over the next week".

Schools in Riyadh switched to remote learning for the second time in a month, according to emails seen by AFP that were received by parents.

The Riyadh attack prompted health officials to activate a rare mass call-up of doctors, a medical source said.

Visa clock ticks

FROM PAGE 1

travel, leaving passengers stranded and raising fears over employment, visas and livelihoods.

He planned to wait until 8:00pm or 9:00pm, as his company had assured him of arranging an alternative flight by last night.

"I don't know what will happen if the promised arrangement falls through. I am the sole breadwinner of a four-member family," he said.

The disruptions followed Saturday's attack on Riyadh airport, which killed 12 people, including two Bangladeshis, and injured more than 300. Four injured Bangladeshis are in intensive care at a Riyadh hospital, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam said yesterday.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), eight flights were cancelled after King Khalid International Airport closed, affecting 2,951 passengers. The cancelled flights were two Biman Bangladesh Airlines flights, one US-Bangla Airlines, three Saudia and two Riyadh Air.

Cancellations of connecting IndiGo and Himalaya Airlines services to Dammam were not in CAAB's tally.

Biman said its Dhaka-Riyadh-Dhaka flights BG339 and BG340, scheduled for October 11 and 12, would remain suspended as the airport closure was extended until 3:00am Bangladesh time today.

It advised passengers not to go to the airport and said rescheduling details would come through official channels. Its Dhaka-Dammam flight BG349, however, departed at 7:50pm, about 30 minutes late, according to Flightradar24.

Many workers learned of the cancellations only at the airport, where they were told to contact their recruiting agencies or employers.

Mohammad Rezaul Karim, from Shyamnagar in Satkhira, had returned to Bangladesh three months ago and was due to resume work in Dammam. He reached the airport around 1:00pm for a connecting IndiGo flight, only to learn at the boarding counter that it was cancelled.

"I waited under the sun without lunch or water," he said.

Around 7:30pm, his agency told him to spend the night in Dhaka and promised a flight today. Two other Dammam-bound workers, Mohammad Arif and Mohammad Tamim Islam, were also affected.

Saimon, who had returned on September 7 on leave, reached the airport around 1:30pm for a Himalaya Airlines flight to Dammam via Kathmandu. Counter staff told him it was cancelled, and his employer asked him to contact his travel agency.

Mohammad Jahidul Islam, from Daulatpur in Kushtia, arrived for a Riyadh flight with a ticket from his employer. With two children and elderly parents to support, he said, "I am considering returning to my village till further information is provided."

For some, a deadline adds to the pressure.

Mohammad Shahin, also bound for Dammam via Kathmandu, must return to Saudi Arabia by October 15 or secure a leave extension and permission to travel. Advised to go home to Kushtia and wait for his agency, he was on a ferry to his village around 7:30pm.

Shankar Kumar Das, who had spent four months in Bangladesh, was heading back to Narail to await news. Like Hasan, both Shahin and Shankar are sole breadwinners. Moreover, the two have loans to repay.

Asked why he wanted to return despite the conflict in the region, Shankar said, "I have a family to feed and loans to repay. Conflict or not, I have to go back to work to earn a living."

Workers from distant districts face wasted journeys to Dhaka, extra travel and living expenses, and no clear idea how long they must wait.

Recruiting agencies are trying to find alternatives.

Mohammad Belayat Hossain of MRJ Global said his agency was working to arrange flights for workers whose IndiGo journeys were disrupted.

But it remains unclear how quickly replacements can be secured, whether workers will bear extra costs, how many of those affected are migrant workers, and whether employers will extend leave for those facing deadlines.

The disruption comes as Bangladesh's overseas employment market is already under pressure.

According to Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) data, 5,69,979 Bangladeshis received clearance for overseas jobs in January-September, down about 32 percent from 8,38,892 a year earlier.

Saudi Arabia remained the largest destination, with 32,915 clearances in September alone.

It is also the largest source of remittances.

According to Bangladesh Bank, Saudi Arabia contributed $5.85 billion of Bangladesh's $35.59 billion in 2025-26 fiscal year, and $1.65 billion, or 19.2 percent, of the $8.59 billion received in July-September.

No remittance loss has been recorded so far, but prolonged disruption could cut earnings if workers cannot start jobs or return to existing ones.

The stakes are high for first-time migrants, while returning workers face extra travel costs and days or weeks without income.

For Hasan, the consequences could begin with a missed flight and an expiring visa but go much further.

Having spent heavily on his first overseas job, he risks losing time, money and the chance to earn for his family before his work life in Saudi Arabia has even begun.

When he spoke to The Daily Star yesterday, his visa deadline was just hours away, and he was still dependent on his company's assurance that a flight would be arranged.

CAB questions

FROM PAGE 1

His comments came a day after the parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources raised questions over fuel price hikes without public hearings and capacity payments to power plants.

A member questioned why public hearing regulations had not been framed in the 23 years since the relevant law was enacted.

Another called for a forensic audit to verify power plants' actual generation capacity and assess capacity payments.

Citing the 2021 example, Shamsul said that 28 companies were involved at the time, and around 10 to 12 submitted freight invoices showing costs of about $120 per tonne.

CAB submitted a document showing a freight cost of $69 per tonne for a shipment through Mongla port, but BERC did not accept it.

Shamsul questioned whether the commission had adequately examined the differences in the proposed costs, arguing that each charge should be supported by evidence before being included in the price calculation.

He also questioned BERC's response to complaints from LPG distributors.

In a letter dated September 21, the Bangladesh LPG Distributors Association reportedly told BERC and other authorities that suppliers were charging distributors Tk 1,550–1,720 per cylinder against the prescribed rate of Tk 1,475.

The complaint should have prompted a formal investigation to establish whether suppliers were violating the regulated pricing structure, Shamsul said, while calling for an inquiry into BERC's conduct.

CAB had sought action under Section 11 of the BERC law, including an inquiry through a judicial council, he added.

Contacted, BERC Chairman Jalal Ahmed said the commission had held public hearings twice in 2021, in April and October, before adopting a monthly LPG pricing mechanism based on changes in the Saudi contract price, freight charges, the dollar exchange rate and fuel costs.

Monthly hearings were unnecessary because these factors were largely beyond the commission's control and had been covered by the decisions taken at the 2021 hearings.

Jalal, who joined BERC in August 2024, said the commission had followed the same process since before his appointment.

He denied that BERC had defied the High Court directive, saying the commission had held hearings as ordered and established the monthly pricing mechanism through this process.

However, Jalal said BERC planned to review dealer and retailer commissions, which were fixed in 2021.

"If we move to revise these, we will certainly hold a public hearing," he said.

At the seminar, Mohammed Amirul Haque, president of the LPG Operators Association of Bangladesh (LOAB), said BERC sets prices monthly based on international market movements, the Saudi contract price, and other cost components.

"Our price for LPG is not dictated by us," he said, arguing that BERC determines the regulated rates, including those charged to dealers.

However, Haque acknowledged that consumers are paying 30-40 percent above the official price in the current market.

LOAB had warned operators, distributors and retailers against overcharging and market manipulation.

In a press release issued on September 30, the association called for legal action against anyone found hoarding LPG or selling it above the regulated price.

"My stand is very clear: if any of my operators does anything wrong, take legal steps against that operator, distributor or retailer."

He urged law enforcement agencies, district administrations and consumer rights authorities to monitor retail markets and take action against violators.

Matheendra De Zoysa, chief operating officer of Omera LPG, said the company sells cylinders at BERC-set prices but has limited control over what retailers charge consumers.

While the company can exercise some oversight over distributors, its influence diminishes further down the supply chain.

He cited Sri Lanka as an example of a country where consumer protection authorities conduct field inspections, operate hotlines and impose substantial fines on businesses selling goods above regulated prices.

Abu Sayed Raza, chief marketing officer of Fresh LPG, also defended BERC's pricing, saying the rates reflect international market movements, including changes in the Saudi contract price, along with premiums and other costs.

The Saudi contract price rose by 44 percent in April, prompting BERC to set the price at Tk 1,940 for a 12kg cylinder.

For October, the regulator set the price at Tk 1,837, despite a roughly 10 percent increase in the Saudi contract price from the previous month.

The Saudi contract price had risen from around $383 per tonne in July 2023 to $712.50 per tonne in October, Raza said, arguing that the regulated price is not excessive given the increase in international costs.

2 Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 1

Of them, 11 were on work visas, while the rest travelled to Saudi Arabia on Umrah visas, the ministry said.

Around 500 Bangladeshi passengers were stranded in Riyadh following the incident, the ministry added.

In another development, the foreign ministry strongly condemned the attack on the airport that left 12 dead.

"Bangladesh reiterates its firm solidarity with Saudi Arabia. It calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a peaceful resolution of the ongoing crisis through dialogue and diplomacy," the ministry said in a press release.

The two killed on Saturday are migrant worker Shahed Ahmed of Bogura and pilgrim Hafiz Mufti Mohammad Nasrullah of Cumilla.

After being away from home for two straight years, Shahed had returned to his village in Bogura to spend a month with his wife and two sons.

Shahed had been working as a plumber in Jeddah since 2013, reports our Bogura correspondent.

On Friday, the 36-year-old Bangladeshi left for Saudi Arabia to resume his work.

Shortly after landing at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, he called his wife around 5:30pm (BST) to let her know he had reached safely.

It was the last time she would hear his voice.

Shahed is survived by his wife Kohinoor Akhter Kakoli, 26, and their two sons, Abdullah, 6, and Kawsar, 11, said his cousin, Masum Rana.

His relatives urged the government to take immediate steps to bring his body home and provide his family with financial assistance.

Another deceased, Nasrullah, of Cumilla's Nangalkot upazila, was travelling to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah and was waiting at the Riyadh airport for a connecting flight when the attack took place, said his brother-in-law, Mohammad Nasir Uddin.

The 35-year-old was the assistant deputy director, or assistant muhtamim, of Jamia Arabia Darul Uloom Madrasa in Kamrangirchar, Dhaka.

He left behind his wife and three children, reports our Cumilla correspondent.

SITUATION ON THE GROUND

Around 3.5 million Bangladeshis live in Saudi Arabia, one of the major destinations for Bangladeshi migrant workers. Many Bangladeshis also travel to the country regularly to perform Umrah and Hajj.

Amid "restrictions on media coverage", Bangladeshis living in and around Riyadh face difficulty in keeping track of what is going on.

After the Saturday's strike, schools have stopped in-person classes, while government, semi-government, and private offices have allowed employees to work from home.

"It was only then that we realised something had happened. Apart from that, there is no panic among the Bangladeshi community," a Bangladeshi expatriate living in Riyadh told The Daily Star over the phone.

Bangladeshis living in the city said traffic has also decreased, partly because educational institutions have moved classes online.

Uncertainty is growing, especially among those planning to return home, as several flights have reportedly been cancelled, they said.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam yesterday said the government was working to identify all the Bangladeshi victims and collect information about their families.

Bangladesh's diplomatic missions across the region are maintaining contact with expatriates and providing guidance to help ensure their safety, she said.

At least 14 Bangladeshis have been killed amid the ongoing war in the Middle East, Shama said while responding to a query at her ministry.

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We want no girl's dreams to be halted by financial constraints, insecurity or discrimination. It is the commitment of the present government to ensure that every girl child gets equal opportunities to develop her potential through education, skills and confidence.

PRIME MINISTER TARIQUE RAHMAN
in a message yesterday marking International Day of the Girl Child



PHOTO: STAR

Members of Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshthi perform songs outside Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in the capital's Segunbagicha yesterday evening, protesting an attempt to deface a mural of Rabindranath Tagore the previous day. The mural is among portraits of 10 cultural figures commissioned by Dhaka South City Corporation after it cleared the adjoining footpath of encroachments on October 5.

IN FOCUS

Auto-rickshaw drivers' protest disrupts traffic

Commuters suffer as drivers block roads

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Battery-run auto-rickshaw drivers blocked roads in the capital's Mohammadpur and Hazaribagh areas yesterday, demanding an end to eviction drives and permission to operate on main roads.

The protests caused severe traffic congestion during the morning rush hour, while a shortage of auto-rickshaws in Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Basila and nearby areas left commuters struggling to reach their destinations.

An inspector of the traffic police's Mohammadpur-Basila zone told The Daily Star that drivers blocked Tin Rastar Mor, a key intersection connecting Gabtoli Road with Mohammadpur and Basila, from 9:30am to 11:40am.

Drivers also brought out a procession and blocked Beribadh Road in Hazaribagh and another road near Rayerbazar between 10:00am and 11:30am, said Mosharaf Hossain, officer-in-charge of Hazaribagh Police Station.

The protesters demanded an end to alleged police harassment, claiming their vehicles were being damaged or confiscated. They also sought permission to operate on all Dhaka roads.

Tabassum Mumu, a Dhanmondi resident, said she left home around 11:30am to take her daughter to school but could not find a rickshaw.



Auto-rickshaw drivers block Beribadh Road in the capital's Mohammadpur area during a protest yesterday. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

"I walked to Anam Rangs Plaza, but there were no rickshaws there either. I saw many others on the footpath looking for rides. After spending around 45 minutes trying to find one, I returned home with my child," she said.

Another commuter, Sazid Mehrab, echoed her.

Officials at Mohammadpur, Hazaribagh and Dhanmondi police stations said no eviction drives were conducted in their areas yesterday.

However, police sources suspected the drivers had deliberately suspended services in an unannounced strike against recent traffic police crackdowns on main roads.

Dhaka North City Corporation Administrator Md Shafiqul Islam Khan yesterday said people no longer wanted auto-rickshaws on city streets as they were causing accidents daily. He said the government was working to address the issue.

Earlier, Road Transport Minister Shaikh Rabiul Alam said the government had begun work on a regulatory framework to restrict auto-rickshaw movement on main roads and in key areas.

MUGDHO KILLING

A step towards justice, but the pain remains

ICT frames charges against 26

SHARIFUL ISLAM *and* SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

For the family of Mir Mahfuzur Rahman Mugdho, the young man shot dead while distributing water to protesters during the July uprising, birthdays are no longer occasions for celebration. They are painful reminders of a life cut short and a mother's grief that remains unbearable.

More than two years after his killing, the family saw renewed hope for justice yesterday as the International Crimes Tribunal-2 framed charges against 26 people over the killing of 11 people in Dhaka's Uttara on July 18 and 19, 2024.



MIR MUGDHO

But the development has done little to ease the pain of Mugdho's absence.

"Our last hope is to get justice for Mugdho's killing. We have been seeking it from the very beginning. This is not just our expectation; it is the expectation of every martyr's family," his brother, Mir Mahmudur Rahman Dipto, told The Daily Star.

"The tribunal framed charges against the accused yesterday. Through this step, we have moved forward towards justice," he said.

The family's grief was particularly painful two days ago, on the birthday of Mugdho and his twin brother Snigdho.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

EC to unveil UP polls roadmap today

AHMED DEEPTO

The Election Commission is set to announce a five-phase roadmap for union parishad elections today, with the first phase of polling likely in the second week of January next year.

The first two phases are planned for January and the third for the first week of February, ahead of Ramadan, while the commission aims to complete all five phases by June 6.

Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmanel Masud told The Daily Star yesterday that the roadmap would be announced following a commission meeting at its headquarters in Agargaon at 10:30am.

"We expect to complete all UP elections by June 6. A final decision will be taken tomorrow [today]," he said.

The commission plans to hold polls in 2,000 to 2,500 UPs during the first three phases, each covering more than 800 unions.

"The election schedule will be announced 32 to 35 days before polling day," he said.

The EC has decided to hold elections simultaneously in all unions within an upazila, excluding those whose terms have not expired. Any postponed polls will be held in subsequent phases.

- First phase likely in 2nd week of January
- First 3 phases planned before Ramadan
- 2,000–2,500 UPs to vote in first 3 phases
- EC aims to finish polls by June 6

The commission also plans to hold dialogues with registered political parties before announcing the election schedule.

"We are more likely to sit with political parties before announcing the election schedule. We will seek their cooperation," Masud said.

"We have informed the Local Government Division that the exact election dates will be determined by the Election Commission," he said.

Local government elections have not been held for more than two years, leaving the EC with a backlog as the terms of many bodies have expired.

Bangladesh has 4,580 Union Parishads, 330 municipalities, 503 Upazila Parishads and 13 city corporations.

EC data show that 3,975 of the 4,580 union councils will be eligible for elections by December.

According to Local Government Division data, 311 UPs became eligible for elections by July 30 this year.

On the eligibility of teachers to contest local polls, Masud said private MPO-listed teachers would remain eligible unless the law was amended, although the education ministry's

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

Scrap unnecessary AL-era projects

Recommends JS body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary standing committee on the LGRD ministry yesterday recommended scrapping unnecessary projects allegedly undertaken for corruption during the ousted Awami League government's tenure and prioritising projects that serve the public interest.

The committee also called for investigations into alleged irregularities and corruption in unnecessary projects financed by domestic and foreign sources during the previous government's tenure.

Speaking to reporters afterwards, committee chairman AKM Selim Reza Habib said, "Projects that were unnecessary and undertaken for corruption during the previous fascist regime should be dropped, while new projects necessary for public welfare should be taken up and implemented. We have also emphasised promotions and postings on the basis of merit and competence."

The committee also called for ensuring the quality and durability of development works.

According to a Parliament Secretariat press release, the committee recommended requiring contractors to provide a three-year warranty deposit to ensure the quality, durability, transparency and accountability

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

Why dengue cases remain low in Sylhet, Rangpur

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

While dengue cases have surged across much of the country this year, Sylhet and Rangpur divisions have remained relatively less affected, a trend epidemiologists and health officials attribute to environmental, demographic and urbanisation factors.

Once largely concentrated in Dhaka and other major cities, dengue has spread nationwide in recent years, with coastal divisions such as Khulna and Barishal reporting increasing cases.



Experts cite rainfall, lower urbanisation, fewer Aedes mosquitoes and limited population movement

However, Sylhet and Rangpur have consistently recorded fewer cases and deaths.

With the country's dengue caseload approaching one lakh and deaths exceeding 300 this year, Rangpur has reported 1,061 cases and no deaths, while Sylhet has recorded 426 cases and two deaths, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

In 2023, when Bangladesh recorded its highest-ever dengue caseload and death toll, with 3,21,179 cases and 1,705 deaths,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



People queue at an OMS point in the capital's Mohammadpur area yesterday to buy essential food items at subsidised prices. As the rising cost of living continues to strain household budgets, low-income families are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Built at Tk 11 crore, water treatment plant lies idle

Handover dispute leaves Munshiganj residents without promised water supply

TANJIL HASAN, *Munshiganj*

A water treatment plant built at a cost of around Tk 11 crore in Hatlakshmiganj under Munshiganj municipality has remained inoperative for years due to delays and disagreements over its handover, leaving residents without its intended benefits.

The project was initiated on April 11, 2018, under a water supply scheme for 37 district towns. Younus & Brothers was awarded the contract at an estimated cost of Tk 10,26,90,237.

Scheduled for completion and handover by May 2019, the project faced repeated delays over land-related complications, concerns about pipe quality and other issues.

After three deadline extensions, construction was completed in July 2023, followed by three months of trial operations beginning in August that year.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found the 3,300-square-foot plant completely shut, with stagnant water emitting a foul smell and algae covering the water and various structures.

Caretaker Anil Barman blamed the situation on the municipality's failure to formally take over the facility.

The plant was designed to draw water from the adjacent Dhaleshwari river, treat 3,50,000 litres per hour and supply it to municipal residents.



PHOTO: STAR

The 3,300-square-foot plant is completely shut, with stagnant water emitting a foul smell and algae covering the water.

Mohammad Nabil, a Hatlakshmiganj resident, said industrial waste and pollution from establishments along the riverbanks had made the water unfit for use. Tube wells also failed to provide adequate supplies, he added.

Md Touhidul Islam, chief executive officer of Munshiganj municipality, said then adviser Adilur Rahman and senior officials inspected the plant in January and found construction defects.

"The adviser and the secretary told the chief engineer that the construction work was unsatisfactory. Plaster had fallen off in some places, the paintwork was defective, the floor was damaged, and algae had grown on the structures. They asked for repairs to make the plant fit for handover," he said.

Touhidul said the municipality had requested two production tube wells as river water was unusable during the dry season, but only one had been installed. The requested repairs also remained incomplete.

"Detailed letters on all these issues have been sent to the ministry several times," he added.

However, Md Humayun Kabir, chief engineer of the Munshiganj DPHE, disputed the claims, saying the defects identified by an initial committee had been addressed.

"Subsequently, another committee asked us to install a tube well because river water is unusable during the dry season. That tube well has also been installed. The plant is now ready for handover. We will hand it over whenever the municipality is ready to take it," he said.

IN BRIEF

Journo hurt in machete attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jamalpur*

A journalist was injured in a machete attack in Singua area of Jamalpur's Sarishabari upazila early yesterday.

Mohammad Hafizur Rahman, secretary of Dhanbari Press Club and upazila correspondent for Amar Desh and NTV, was returning home from Dhanbari when he was attacked around 3:00am.

Hafizur said he left Dhanbari around 11:00pm after work, but his motorcycle broke down on the way, delaying his journey. As he reached Singua, a pickup van blocked his path and five to six men armed with machetes emerged from it. They first damaged his motorcycle before hacking his left hand. "When I shouted for help, they fled," he said.

Locals took him to Sarishabari Upazila Health Complex, where he received first aid.

Sarishabari Police Station OC Iqbal Hossain said police were investigating the attack and a case was being filed.

Govt decides to relocate Secretariat to Agargaon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided in principle to relocate the Secretariat to the old trade fair ground in the capital's Agargaon.

Housing and Public Works Minister Zakaria Taher said the decision was taken at a meeting chaired by the prime minister at his office last Wednesday.

"Various aspects of this matter have been under consideration for a long time. For now, a decision in principle has been made, but the final decision will be taken by the cabinet," Zakaria said last night.

During the Awami League government's tenure, decisions to relocate the Secretariat to Agargaon were taken multiple times, but none were implemented.

According to PMO sources, policymakers now want to begin work on the project as soon as possible during the current government's term.

Seven more die with measles-like symptoms

UNB, *Dhaka*

Seven patients died with measles-like symptoms in the 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday, taking the combined number of confirmed and suspected measles-related deaths in the country to 1,162 this year.

The DGHS classified all seven latest fatalities as suspected measles deaths. With the latest deaths, the number of suspected measles fatalities has reached 1,058, while confirmed deaths remain unchanged at 104.

A total of 1,180 new suspected measles cases were reported, taking the number nationwide to 2,05,028.

IDCOL
TOGETHER FOR TOMORROW

Corrigendum/Amendment Notice

With reference to the Notice published on 28 September 2026 for REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (REoI) FOR ENLISTMENT OF DEMAND AGGREGATORS (DAs) FOR THE DOMESTIC ROOFTOP SOLAR (DRS) PROGRAM, It is to notify all concerned that the Submission date has been modified as follows:

	Original	Modified
Submission Date & Time	12/10/2026 4:00 PM	19/10/2026 4:00 PM

NB: REoI has also been amended and is available at **www.idcol.org/home/downloads.**

Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL), UTC Building, Level-17, 8 Panthapath, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka 1215. Phone: +880-2-222248786-91, IPTSP Number: +880-9666-743265, E-mail: drs@idcol.org, Web: www.idcol.org

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- ২৭.২১.০০০০.৪৪৮.০৭.০০১.২৬.৯৪৩ তারিখঃ ০৮/১০/২০২৬খ্রিঃ

e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার গ্রিডের জিএমডি, কালিয়াকৈর দপ্তরের আওতাধীন নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র e-GP পোর্টালে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

ID	Title of Works
1349185	Tree Trimming works of 230kV and 132kV transmission line of all substation under GMD, Kaliakair, Power Grid Bangladesh PLC.
1349128	Dead line checking of 132 & 230 kV Transmission Line and Disk Insulator change work at all Substation under GMD, Kaliakair, Power Grid Bangladesh PLC.
1348867	Supplying, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 2X10kWp Grid Tie Solar System at Kabirpur & Tangail 132kV Grid Sub-Station under GMD, Kaliakair. Power Grid Bangladesh PLC.

আগ্রহী ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

মোহাম্মদ হাসানুল ইসলাম
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, জিএমডি, কালিয়াকৈর

SHANTO-MARIAM UNIVERSITY OF CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY

Vacancy Announcement for the Position of Vice-Chancellor

The Board of Trustees (BoT) of Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology (SMUCT) invites applications from distinguished, dynamic and accomplished academics for the position of Vice-Chancellor.

The incumbent will be responsible for implementing duties & responsibilities in accordance with the Private University Act, 2010.

Academic Qualifications & Experience

Candidates must meet the qualifications and applicable requirements prescribed under the Private University Act, 2010. In general, candidates should possess:

1. Professor with a PhD from a recognized university, preferably in a discipline relevant to the academic programs/disciplines of SMUCT. Third Class/Division/C grade at any stage of educational level will not be accepted.
2. At least 20 (twenty) years of combined experience in university teaching, research, academic administration and institutional management, including substantial experience as a Professor.
3. Experience as Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Dean of a Faculty/School, or equivalent senior academic leadership position in a private university will be given preference.
4. Demonstrated experience or contribution in implementing and managing Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curricula and accreditation will be an added advantage.
5. A strong record of research, scholarly publications, research development and academic collaboration will be considered an added advantage.

Terms & Conditions

- The appointment shall be subject to the approval of the Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and Chancellor of the University, upon recommendation of the Board of Trustees, as applicable under law.
- The University reserves the right to shortlist candidates and conduct an interview/selection process.
- Salary, benefits and other terms and conditions will be offered as per University policy and commensurate with the qualifications and experience of the selected candidate.

Application Procedure

Interested and eligible candidates are requested to submit:

1. A detailed and updated Curriculum Vitae (CV) with cover letter.
2. Copies of academic certificates and transcripts;
3. Details of teaching, research and administrative experience;
4. List of publications and major research achievements;
5. A brief Vision/Strategic Plan for the Development of SMUCT; and
6. Names and contact details of three professional referees.

Applications should be submitted on or before 31st October 2026 in a sealed envelope marked "Application for the Post of Vice-Chancellor" or by email to:

The Chairman, Board of Trustees
Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology Trust
Plot-06, Road/Avenue-06, Sector-17/H-1,
Uttara, Dhaka-1230
Email: chairman_bot@smuct.ac.bd
www.smuct.ac.bd

For Details Please Scan QR Code

জাতীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
বাংলাদেশ

স্মারক নং- ০১(৩৫৯)জাতী.বি./প্রশা./৯৬/১/২৯১২ তারিখ: ২২ আশ্বিন ১৪৩৩ / ৭ অক্টোবর ২০২৬

২য় সমাবর্তন ২০২৭
রেজিস্ট্রেশন সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি

জাতীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ২য় সমাবর্তন আগামী ২৩ জানুয়ারি ২০২৭ তারিখে অনুষ্ঠিত হতে যাচ্ছে। নিম্নবর্ণিত পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ শিক্ষার্থী/গবেষকগণ সমাবর্তনে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য রেজিস্ট্রেশন করতে পারবেন:

ক্রমিক	পরীক্ষার নাম	পাসের বছর
১.	i) স্নাতক (পাস) ii) স্নাতক (সম্মান)	২০১৩ থেকে ২০২৪
২.	i) মাস্টার্স ফাইনাল ii) বিবিএ (BBA) iii) এমএড (MEd) iv) বিএসসি ইন সিএসই (BSc in CSE) v) এলএলবি (LLB) ফাইনাল vi) বিএফএ (BFA) অনার্স vii) বিএফএ (BFA) পাস	২০১৩ থেকে ২০২৩
৩.	এমবিএ (MBA)	২০১৩ থেকে ২০২২
৪.	বিএড (BEd) অনার্স	২০১৪ থেকে ২০২৩
৫.	বিএসসি ইন ইসিই (BSc in ECE)	২০১২ থেকে ২০২৩
৬.	এমএসসি ইন সিএসই (MSc in CSE)	২০১১ থেকে ২০২২
৭.	বিবিএ ইন ট্যুরিজম এন্ড হসপিটালিটি ম্যানেজমেন্ট (BBA in THM)	২০১৯ থেকে ২০২৩
৮.	i) বিএসসি অনার্স ইন অ্যারোনটিক্যাল এন্ড এভিয়েশন সায়েন্স এন্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ii) বিবিএ ইন এভিয়েশন ম্যানেজমেন্ট	২০২০ থেকে ২০২৪
৯.	অনার্স ইন থিয়েটার এন্ড মিডিয়া স্টাডিজ (TMS)	২০১৯ থেকে ২০২২
১০.	i) বিএসসি অনার্স ইন এফডিটি (FDT) ii) বিএসসি অনার্স ইন এএমটি (AMT) iii) বিএসসি অনার্স ইন কেএমটি (KMT) iv) এমবিএ ইন ট্যুরিজম এন্ড হসপিটালিটি ম্যানেজমেন্ট (MBA in THM)	২০২২ থেকে ২০২৩
১১.	মাস্টার্স ইন অ্যাপ্লাইড ক্রিমিনোলজি এন্ড পুলিশ ম্যানেজমেন্ট (ACPM)	২০১৬ থেকে ২০২৩
১২.	মাস্টার্স ইন মিডিয়া এন্ড জার্নালিজম	২০২০ থেকে ২০২২
১৩.	এমপিএড (MPEd)	২০২০ থেকে ২০২৩
১৪.	এমএসএড (MSEd)	২০১০ থেকে ২০২৪
১৫.	অন-ক্যাম্পাস এমএএস (MAS)/এএমবিএ (AMBA)	২০১৫ থেকে ২০২৫
১৬.	এমফিল (MPhil)/পিএইচডি (PhD) অ্যাওয়ার্ডপ্রাপ্ত গবেষক	২০১৩ থেকে ২০২৫

রেজিস্ট্রেশন সংক্রান্ত তথ্য:

রেজিস্ট্রেশন লিংক	**www.convocation.nu.ac.bd**
অনলাইন রেজিস্ট্রেশন শুরুর তারিখ	১২ অক্টোবর, ২০২৬
অনলাইন রেজিস্ট্রেশন করার শেষ তারিখ	১২ নভেম্বর, ২০২৬
রেজিস্ট্রেশন ফি	৪,০০০ (চার হাজার) টাকা অথবা ৪০ (চল্লিশ) ইউএস ডলার (USD)
সনদ ফি (প্রতিটি)	৮০০ (আটশত) টাকা অথবা ১০ (দশ) ইউএস ডলার (USD) (ইতোমধ্যে মূল সনদ গ্রহণ করে থাকলে সনদ বাবদ ফি দিতে হবে না)
পেমেন্ট মাধ্যম	সোনালী সেবা, মোবাইল ব্যাংকিং, ইন্টারনেট ব্যাংকিং ও ক্রেডিট/ডেবিট কার্ড (Mastercard, Visa, AmEx, Nexus etc.)
জরুরি যোগাযোগ (সকাল ৮.৩০ হতে বিকাল ৪.৩০)	ই-মেইল: convocation@nu.ac.bd মোবাইল: +৮৮০১৩৪৭-৫৫২১৫১-৭ (রেজিস্ট্রেশন সংক্রান্ত সহযোগিতার জন্য) +৮৮০১৩৪৭-৫৫২১৫৮ (পেমেন্ট সংক্রান্ত সহযোগিতার জন্য)

বি.দ্রঃ সমাবর্তন অনুষ্ঠানের সুনির্দিষ্ট সময়, ভেন্যু ও অনুষ্ঠানসূচি যথাসময়ে জাতীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ওয়েবসাইট (www.nu.ac.bd) ও গণমাধ্যমে জানানো হবে।

রেজিস্ট্রেশন লিংক

ভাইস-চ্যান্সেলরের নির্দেশক্রমে-
07.10.2026
(মোল্লা মাহফুজ আল হোসেন)
রেজিস্ট্রার
জাতীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

GD-2474

Rupali Bank PLC
Procurement Division-2
Head Office
Eunoos Trade Center (Level-14), 52-53, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000.
Telephone: + 01915193425; e-mail: ho-procurement-2@rupalibank.com.bd ;
Website: www.rupalibank.com.bd

Ref. No: Proka/Prokibi-2/2026/27 Dated: 11.10.2026

e-Tender Notice
Open Tendering Method (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of the following Goods—

Invitation Ref. No	Tender ID	Name of work	Tender publishing Date and Time	Tender Closing and opening Date & Time
HO/ICT/2026/49, Date: 11.10.2026	1348885	Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Server [For Application (7) & For Backup Solution (1)], Red Hat OpenShift Virtualization Engine (Bare Metal Node), Premium (102 Sockets up to 128 Cores), Oracle Linux, Premium Support & Red Hat Enterprise Linux Server and Premium (Physical or Virtual Nodes) for DC & DRC of Rupali Bank PLC.	12.10.2026 4:00 PM	02.11.2026 4.00 PM
HO/ICT/2026/50, Date: 11.10.2026	1348340	Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Backup Software Solution, SAN Storage [for Production (2) & for Disk Based Backup (1)] and SAN Switch for DC & DRC of Rupali Bank PLC.	12.10.2026 4:00 PM	02.11.2026 4.00 PM
HO/ICT/2026/51, Date: 11.10.2026	1348042	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 08 (Eight) sets CISC Server for ICT Operations Division of Rupali Bank PLC.	12.10.2026 4:00 PM	02.11.2026 4.00 PM

- 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 (https://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 any registered Bank's branch.
- Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Md. Shahidur Rahman)
Deputy General Manager,
Rupali Bank PLC,
Procurement Division-2,
Eunoos Trade Center (Level-14),
52-53, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000.

GD-2472



Palestinians sift through the rubble at the site of a house targeted in an Israeli airstrike in Al-Zawayda, central Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Russia, Ukraine agree to 'energy ceasefire'

Says Trump amid row over diesel deal with Moscow

AFP, *United States*

US President Donald Trump said in a brief statement yesterday that Russia and Ukraine had agreed to halt strikes on each other's energy infrastructure.

"Effective immediately, there is an ENERGY CEASEFIRE in the War between Russia and Ukraine. Both parties have agreed. Do not break it!" he wrote on his Truth Social network, without further details.

There was no immediate confirmation from Ukraine or Russia on an agreement, which follows an escalation in deadly attacks in the war.

Earlier yesterday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reiterated his country would be ready to stop hitting Russian oil refineries if Russia curbed its attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

Zelensky's comment came amid a spat between Trump and the Ukrainian leader, who had denounced a US move to temporarily ease sanctions on Russian diesel.

Meanwhile, two people have been killed in a Ukrainian attack on the Russian-controlled town of Lysychansk in Ukraine's Luhansk region, the RIA Novosti news agency reported, citing the Russian-appointed head of the region, Leonid Pasechnik.

A steep rise in global diesel prices, which followed the outbreak of the Iran war in February, has become a political liability for Trump's Republican Party ahead of next month's midterm elections, when opposition Democrats could gain control of one or both houses of Congress.

"I think it's time for Ukraine to get a new president," Trump told reporters at the White House, saying Zelensky had hurt global diesel supplies with strikes on Russian refineries.

"He wants to make problems for our farmers, our ranchers, with diesel fuel because Russia supplies a large portion of the diesel fuel throughout the world." Earlier in the day, Zelensky said Trump's announcement on Friday of the diesel deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin had emboldened Moscow. Kyiv has instead urged Washington to pressure Moscow for serious negotiations to end the 4-1/2-year-old war.

The Russian government said on Saturday it had partially lifted a ban on diesel exports.

"Today, Russia said thank you for the lifting of sanctions on diesel exports by dropping five glide bombs on residential buildings in Zaporizhzhia," Zelensky said. "Last night provided yet more confirmation that Russia perceives any easing of pressure as a signal that it can supposedly keep fighting, that it can supposedly keep dropping bombs on cities.





KSA has few options as Houthis target its ambitions

INTERNATIONAL DESK

After the deadliest attack in Saudi Arabia in more than a decade, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman faces mounting pressure to stop Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi militia from firing missiles and drones at his country.

Yet the Saudi de facto ruler has few options in an asymmetric conflict with an adversary that has grown stronger since he led a war against it a decade ago, analysts say.

The Houthis have carried out three deadly attacks on Riyadh's international airport over the past week. An apparent missile or drone strike on a passenger terminal on Saturday killed at least 12 people and injured more than 300, many critically, forcing authorities to suspend airport operations, reports AFP.

The attacks have brought Saudi Arabia's long-running war in Yemen home, undermining the sense of security. They have also struck at the heart of Prince Mohammed's ambition to transform the oil-dependent kingdom into a global business and tourism hub, reports The New York Times

A political settlement with the Houthis has become increasingly difficult as their confidence and demands grow. A military victory is also unlikely, analysts say.

"The only realistic solution for the Saudis is an end to the Iranian-American war," said F Gregory Gause, a Saudi specialist at the Middle East Institute. He said Washington would need to secure Iran's commitment to ending Houthi hostilities as part of a broader agreement.

TRUMP COVERAGE

US Justice Dept probes five TV networks

AFP, *Washington*

The US Department of Justice is investigating five television networks after they briefly suspended their pool coverage of President Donald Trump, US media reported on Saturday.

Trump barred CNN, MS NOW and Politico from the White House last month for distributing what he called "fake news" and "fiction and lies," a decision later reversed by a federal judge.

At the time, the top five US broadcasters halted pool coverage of the White House -- where a broadcaster films on behalf of all television outlets -- for several days in solidarity with CNN.

The pool is a rotating group of journalists that travel with the president and provide coverage to other outlets, due to limited space.

Officials from the Justice Department contacted the networks on Friday and demanded communications and materials related to the White House TV pool, the New York Times reported.

Justice Department spokeswoman Emily Covington told the Washington Post that the five networks -- ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC and Fox News -- had "boycotted covering White House events."

"Group boycotts among commercial competitors can violate the Sherman Act," Covington said.

IN BRIEF

109 dead after boat capsizes off Djibouti: UN



AFP, *Geneva*

At least 109 migrants died, including 15 children, and some 116 went missing when a boat sank off the shores of Djibouti overnight on October 8-9, a UN agency said yesterday.

Survivors said the vessel -- which was carrying 350 people from Djibouti to Yemen -- capsized north of the Djibouti town of Obock, according to a statement from the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

"This is a devastating loss of life. Our thoughts are with the survivors and the families who have lost loved ones or remain without news of their relatives," said Alexandre Coissac, IOM chief of mission in Djibouti, in the statement.

He said IOM teams were on the ground alongside Djiboutian authorities to provide emergency aid.

Lula accuses Meta of polls interference

AFP, *Brasília*

The campaign of Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva accused tech giant Meta of election interference on Saturday after his social media content was allegedly blocked on the company's platforms.

The campaign claimed that in recent days, Meta "prevented President Lula's profile from promoting Instagram feed posts," while a post from his official account "experienced an interruption in view counts, which affected its reach."

"Meta's actions constitute an attempt to interfere in Brazilian electoral process to the benefit of Flavio Bolsonaro's candidacy."

"The series of technical issues... raises strong suspicions that Meta's actions constitute an attempt to interfere in the Brazilian electoral process to the benefit of Flavio Bolsonaro's candidacy," the statement added.



LANDSLIDE-FLOOD

Nepal urges villagers to evacuate

REUTERS, *Kathmandu*

Nepali authorities yesterday urged villagers to move to safer places after a flood in a river in the central part of the country swept away several houses and infrastructure, but there were no reports of any casualties.

Two women and three men were out of contact, the national disaster authority said. The army said a further 49 people, including a foreigner, had been rescued. They did not give the person's nationality.

A landslide in Chumnubri village in Gorkha district, about 100 km (62 miles) west of Kathmandu, blocked the Budhi Gandaki River, leading to downstream flooding, authorities said.

The Budhi Gandaki is a tributary of the Trishuli River, downstream from another tributary where a glacier collapse caused a catastrophic flood in August that killed 1,457 people.

Request for Expressions of Interest
for
Selection of Survey Data Quality and Processing Consultant for HIES

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH			
1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Planning	
2	Agency	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and Informatics Division	
3	Client Name	Project Director, Statistical Capacity Enhancement and Modernization Project (SCEMP)	
4	Client Code	Not used at present	
5	Client District	Dhaka	
6	**Expression of Interest for Selection of**	**Survey Data Quality and Processing Consultant** for HIES	
7	EOI Ref No	52.01.0000.000.909.07.0028.26.1487	
8	Date	11.10.2026	
9	Method of Selection	SIC	
KEY INFORMATION			
FUNDING INFORMATION			
10	Source of Funds	Development Budget	
11	Development Partners (if applicable)	IDA	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION			
12	Project / Programme Code (if applicable)	N/A	
13	Project / Programme Name (if applicable)	Statistical Capacity Enhancement and Modernization Project (SCEMP)	
14	EOI Closing Date and Time	Date: 27.10.2026	Time: 04.00 pm
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT			
15	Brief Description of Assignment	• Real-Time Data Quality Monitoring & Field Assurance • Data Processing, Cleaning, and Benchmarking • Metadata, Documentation, and Release Preparation • Capacity Development and Knowledge Transfer • Coordination and Technical Consultation Detailed description of Assignment is given in the RFA which is available in the web address given below.	
16	Qualification and Experience	**(i) Qualification** The qualification shall be a Master's degree or PhD in Statistics, Economics Econometrics, Development Economics, Agricultural Economics, or a relate quantitative field. **(ii) Experience** • Minimum 7 (seven) years of experience in the design, implementation, and analysis of household surveys including income and consumption surveys, panel surveys or household surveys for impact evaluations, with direct responsibility for data quality and cleaning. Experience with HIES, MICS, SVRS, or comparable national surveys is strongly preferred. • Relevant experience in research, academia, government or semi-government, international organizations, or independent consulting shall be considered on an equivalent basis. • Proficiency in Stata or R; familiarity with CSPro or Survey Solutions. • Demonstrated experience preparing survey metadata and documentation using the DDI standard and IHSN guidance, including anonymized public-use datasets and codebooks. Familiarity with NADA or comparable cataloguing tools is preferred. • Demonstrated ability to directly carry out data processing, cleaning and documentation, and produce reproducible code.	
17	Other Details	The undersigned now invites eligible Applicants to apply for the position. Applicants are invited to provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (complete CV with other details as required as per the Application Forms) Interested consultants are required to submit their expressions of interest in accordance with the Standard Request for Application Forms which may be collected from the office of the undersigned during normal office hours or from the website: www.bbs.gov.bd Expression of Interest shall be submitted in sealed envelope delivered to the office of the undersigned or to the email address given below clearly marked ***"Expressions of Interest for Selection of Survey Data Quality and Processing Consultant".***	
CLIENT DETAILS			
18	Name of Official Inviting EOI	Mohammad Fazla Azim	
19	Designation of Official Inviting EOI	Project Director & Joint Secretary, SCEM Project	
20	Address of Official Inviting EOI	Statistical Capacity Enhancement and Modernization Project (SCEMP), E-27/A, 8th floor, Agargaon, Dhaka – 1207	
21	Contact details of Official Inviting EOI	Phone: 02-55007041	Email: pd.scemp@bbs.gov.bd
22	The Client reserves the right to reject all EOI's		

11/10/2026
Mohammad Fazla Azim
Project Director, SCEM Project

GD-2475

The Daily Star
FOUNDER EDITOR: **LATE S. M. ALI**

Why can't the state keep girls safe?

Deaths of at least 5,264 girls from violence in 10 years expose grave failures

Why are so many girl children in our country still subjected to horrific violence? Words fail us when we see the sheer amount of abuse they have to endure even today. According to a report by Jugantor, at least 5,264 girl children died after being subjected to various sorts of violence over the last 10 years. The harrowing data, based on Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) reports from 2016 to 2025, shows that at least 2,377 of the murdered children were between 13 and 18 years of age. These are children who were robbed of the chance to grow up and have a life of their own. Why did the state, whose foremost responsibility is to protect citizens, continue to fail these young lives before they even got the chance to begin meaningfully?

The state's failure in this regard is even more evident when the fact that only 2,220 cases were filed in connection with the deaths—less than half of the total number of deaths reported—is considered. In the first eight months of this year, at least 254 girl children died after being subjected to various forms of violence, but only 81 cases were filed in connection with these incidents, pointing to barriers to securing justice. Many families are deterred from seeking justice due to police negligence, fear of political retribution, financial constraints, and social stigma. Even when justice is sought, weak investigation, prolonged proceedings, and limitations in forensic investigations often allow perpetrators to evade accountability.

The broader scale of violence against women and children in the country is equally alarming. In the first nine months of this year, 16,715 cases involving violence against women and children were filed nationwide. This covers a wider range of offences than ASK's data on deaths of girls. Beyond these reported cases of violence, deeply entrenched gender norms continue to threaten girls' safety, autonomy, and future prospects in our country. At least 51 percent of women aged 20 to 24 years old were married before turning 18 in 2022. Although the figure is down from 73 percent in 1993-94, the decline is far slower than in neighbouring countries.

The government must do more to address these vulnerabilities. This can start with ensuring that girls can complete their education and that child marriage laws are properly enforced. Our streets must be safer for our daughters. The criminal justice system must be strengthened to ensure that survivors have access to safe reporting mechanisms, legal aid, shelters, and psychosocial support.

The government must do more to address these vulnerabilities. This can start with ensuring that girls can complete their education and that child marriage laws are properly enforced. Our streets must be safer for our daughters. The criminal justice system must be strengthened to ensure that survivors have access to safe reporting mechanisms, legal aid, shelters, and psychosocial support. Perpetrators must not be allowed to go scot-free due to their political affiliation. And the authorities must conduct prompt and impartial investigations, while the justice system must ensure timely trials and effective witness protection.

Low-income families need more support

Expand safety nets to prevent a larger slip into poverty

The fall in subsidised food distribution in the first quarter of the current fiscal year is perplexing, amid prolonged high inflation; fuel, gas, and electricity price hikes; slow wage growth; and reports of lay-offs in several industrial sectors. Food ministry data show that 7.55 lakh tonnes of rice and wheat were distributed between July 1 and September 30, down 7 percent from 8.15 lakh tonnes a year ago. According to a report in this daily, the decline largely reflects lower open market sales (OMS) of subsidised rice and wheat flour, with first-quarter distribution falling 22 percent year-on-year to 2.05 lakh tonnes in FY2026-27. Meanwhile, media reports suggest that lower-income families, even with supplementary income, are struggling to make ends meet amid the rising cost of living, with many queuing for hours to buy essentials from TCB trucks. Some are even cutting their monthly food budgets to supplement higher transportation costs, gas, and electricity prices, which went up as the government pushed up energy prices, mostly in response to ongoing conflicts in the Middle East.

Distribution also fell under several other programmes in the government's public food distribution system (PFDS). Among those are the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme (which witnessed a 20-percent reduction in distribution), and Chittagong Hill Tracts and Others programme (which saw a 78-percent drop). However, distribution under Food Friendly Programmes, Vulnerable Group Development, and Vulnerable Women Benefit increased slightly.

A decline in relief-related food distribution is understandable, as there have been no major widespread natural disasters so far this fiscal year, but Bandarban did experience several days of severe rain and flash floods in July. One would expect a higher amount of foodgrain distribution under the CHT category, not otherwise. Besides, the measles and dengue outbreaks in the country have also put many families under severe financial strain. Inflation easing slightly recently is doing little to help these households as wage increases have not kept pace.

The government, therefore, should expand and ensure better coverage of social safety net programmes, particularly as the UN Food and Agriculture (FAO) programme in its report last month identified several regions where food insecurity would reach crisis level between September and December. Besides, the World Bank also warned that 6.2 crore people are at risk of falling into poverty. These forecasts demand urgent action to close safety-net gaps.

Taxing microsavings will weaken financial inclusion of the poor



Dr Md Main Uddin is professor and former chairman of the Department of Banking and Insurance at Dhaka University. He can be reached at mainuddin@du.ac.bd.

■ **MD MAIN UDDIN**

"Financial inclusion" is the buzzword that has been used to increase the number of banks in Bangladesh. It was argued that many people, primarily the poor, still don't have bank accounts and so the number of banks should be increased. At present, 62 scheduled banks operate in Bangladesh. But only 28.3 percent of the population aged 15 years and older have accounts with banks or other financial institutions, according to the Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics 2023. This is indeed a paradox. Although state-owned banks and a handful of private banks operate in both rural and urban areas, the poor have less access to their services. Foreign banks don't operate in rural areas, let alone offer any services to the poor. Not many banks have customised services for the poor, either.

Conventional banks fail to reach the poor because their lending approach is too conservative. They sanction loans with collateral, but lower-income families rarely have assets to provide as collateral. Furthermore, banks generally follow some defined criteria for lending, with which most of the poor fail to comply. They prefer large loans to minimise operating costs, but the poor seek small loans which these banks avoid due to high operating costs. Moreover, the cost of monitoring numerous small borrowers is high for traditional banks because the rural poor live in remote areas, and most of the urban poor are mobile and lack permanent addresses. The poor also frequently use loans in unproductive sectors. Hence, lending to the poor following traditional methods is deemed risky.

Conventional banks also have to deal with asymmetric information—a situation where one party has more information than the other—while selecting low-income borrowers. The poor often lack a formal credit history, which may lead to adverse selection—selecting the wrong borrowers at the cost of the right ones. Wrong borrowers, if selected, tend to divert loans to unproductive sectors, leading to moral hazards. Therefore, banks prefer collateral-backed lending to the poor.

Banks are private firms with a public purpose; bound to provide banking services to all. But banks in Bangladesh fail to provide financial services to the poor, and especially poor women. This is not done on purpose but because banks follow a faulty loan production system where the poor remain excluded. By serving the rich and non-poor customers, our banking sector has ended up with a non-performing loan (NPL) rate of 32.78 percent—the highest globally. Although moneylenders in the informal credit market provide loans to the poor without collateral, a limited number of professional moneylenders, with inadequate funds, cannot reach all the poor. On top of that, their interest rates are abnormally high.

In this setting, microfinance institutions (MFIs) have been able to grant collateral-free loans to the poor, reducing the asymmetric information problem through self-selection of groups and joint liability. They leave the responsibility of borrower selection to the poor. Generally, in microcredit, a group of five to ten members is formed. Although a loan is sanctioned to one borrower, all group members remain liable for its repayment. Every member has an incentive to monitor the loan performance. They ensure that the loan is appropriately used and repaid on time. This form of peer pressure works as social collateral—a replacement for physical collateral. Microfinance members don't need to visit the offices; rather, the employees reach them in their villages.

MFIs have been able to reach the poor, nearly 91 percent of whom are women. MFIs supplement credit with microsavings. Microcredit is often linked to savings—that is, the higher the savings of a borrower, the larger the size of a loan. Microsavings aid capital formation and provide a safety net for families facing risks of illness, natural disasters, crop failure, and income loss. MFIs also provide interest on savings like banks. However, a recent move by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to collect tax on interest earned from microsavings has raised serious concerns among microfinance operators.

Statistically speaking, the amount of microsavings is low, and so is the profit on them. The interest rates vary between 6 and 12 percent. The Microcredit Regulatory Authority (MRA) data shows that, as of June 2026, the amount of savings of the country's 633 licensed MFIs was Tk 95,720 crore. If the average interest rate on these savings is considered 8 percent, the sum of interest payment was about Tk 7,658 crore. A 10-percent tax on this profit will result in revenue of nearly Tk 766 crore. This amount will certainly finance the budget deficit, but at what cost? This figure is minuscule for the government but significant for the poor. If the poor feel discouraged from saving, the low saving rate will lead to higher dependency on credit, thus increasing their indebtedness. This will also reduce their financial backing for mitigating risks.

Whereas the poor should be encouraged and incentivised to join microfinance programmes to improve their livelihood, the government has imposed a tax on microsaving profits. These microsavers are low-income people; their earnings are well below the taxable income threshold. If the profits of their savings at MFIs are taxed at the same rate as that of deposits at banks, it would be imbalanced. The main objective of microfinance is to fight poverty by increasing the financial inclusion of unserved communities. Even though traditional banks receive deposits from the poor, they have reservations about granting them loans. They transfer funds from the poor to the rich, creating financial inequality. But microfinance operators reinvest deposits from disadvantaged communities back into those communities.

MFIs have been successful in reducing the presence of moneylenders. The poor get loans at a maximum of 24 percent, instead of abnormally high interest rates. Considering the high operating costs of microcredit, this rate is not irrational. But one research study found that the poor paid as much as 250-percent interest on a loan taken from the informal credit market. As a result of granting small loans from small deposits, the risk of maturity mismatch is low. Microcredit has low default risk and outstanding repayment performance—95 percent loans are repaid.



VISUAL: **SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR**

We must remember that microfinance emerged because the traditional banks failed to reach the poor. Conventional banks claimed the poor were not bankable. But MFIs proved that the poor can be successfully served with financial services to reduce poverty.

Instead of supporting the microfinance sector, the government is now intending to collect taxes from the poor. Through this change, despite having an income below the taxable income threshold, low-income populations will be unfairly included in the direct tax system. If the poor turn away from saving up, it may prove to be catastrophic. The government should revert this decision.

Can sand-filling help coastal households adapt to salinity?



Md Ayatullah Khan is doctoral researcher in Department of Geography at Hong Kong Baptist University, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong.

■ **MD AYATULLAH KHAN**

In May 2025, during a focus group discussion in Sonailtala of Mongla upazila, Bagerhat, I learned how the people living in this salinity-affected coastal area have been adapting to changing environmental conditions in ways that are rarely captured in formal research or policy discussions. One such practice is raising homestead land with sand. Some residents told us that they had brought sand and raised their homestead land around a decade ago. Their initial intention was not to improve agricultural production or grow fruit trees. They simply wanted to raise their homesteads above the surrounding land and reduce their exposure to saline water.

But something unexpected happened over time. On some of these raised homesteads, residents are now able to grow fruit trees, including mango trees. Residents said that before raising the land, growing such trees was difficult because of salinity and the associated environmental conditions. After several years, the raised land appears to have created a more favourable environment for vegetation.

This does not prove that sand-filling is a solution to soil salinity. There are still too many unanswered questions. We do not yet know how much the salinity level changed, whether the improvement is primarily owing to the additional soil depth, improved drainage, changes in groundwater movement, or other factors. Nor do we know how long such an effect could be sustained.

But these observations raise an important research question: can raising homestead land with suitable soil or sand help coastal households cope with salinity? The question is particularly relevant for coastal Bangladesh, where salinity is a growing concern. Affected communities are already spending their own money to adapt, often without technical guidance or government support. Their experiences should not automatically be dismissed simply because their ideas do not originate in laboratories or within development projects.

At the same time, there is a critical issue with this practice. Extracting sand from natural sources is restricted or prohibited in many circumstances because uncontrolled sand extraction can damage rivers, agricultural land, and ecosystems. Therefore, promoting indiscriminate sand extraction as a salinity adaptation strategy would create another environmental problem.

There is also an equity issue. Raising a homestead with a substantial amount of sand requires money. Poor households may not be able to afford it, while relatively wealthy families can. If sand-based land raising proves useful, it cannot become an adaptation strategy available only to those who can pay for it.

Another major limitation is that using sand to raise homesteads is not necessarily a permanent solution. Sand may raise the elevation of a homestead, but it cannot remove salt from the wider landscape. Salinity can return through tidal flooding, groundwater, surface-water intrusion, and poor drainage. In other words, piling on sand does not mean that the underlying salinity problem of the area will be solved.

Interestingly, residents in Sonailtala also suggested another possible application. They argued that embankments could be constructed using a sand-filled core, with reinforced sides, to provide greater protection against saline water entering agricultural and homestead areas. This idea also requires careful scientific assessment. The stability of an embankment depends on its design, materials used, slope, drainage ability, foundational conditions, and exposure to water and erosion. A sand-filled core cannot simply be assumed to make an embankment more durable. Still, the local suggestion is worth exploring, particularly because the people living behind these embankments understand their failures in ways that may not always be visible from an engineering office.

We often approach vulnerable communities with a list of technologies that experts believe they need. But communities are already experimenting with their own solutions.

This is also why Bangladesh's adaptation research needs to change direction. We often approach vulnerable communities with a list of technologies that experts believe they need. But communities are already experimenting with their own solutions. Some may be ineffective or even environmentally harmful. But some may contain an idea that deserves further investigation.

The practice of raising homestead land is one such example. Instead of immediately promoting or dismissing land raising, researchers should scientifically compare raised and non-raised homesteads. We need to analyse soil salinity at various depths, evaluate groundwater conditions, measure vegetation health, and track the costs of raising land against long-term benefits, especially for low-income households.

Crucially, future research must identify sustainable filling alternatives. Dredged river sediment, locally available non-saline soil, or other environmentally safe materials could be assessed based on their physical and chemical characteristics.

The lesson from Sonailtala union is, therefore, not that "sand can solve salinity", but rather the lesson that local adaptation deserves to become a starting point for scientific inquiry. Coastal Bangladesh has extensive experience of dealing with floods, cyclones, river erosion, and salinity. Communities along this belt have therefore developed countless small-scale adaptation mechanisms, many of which remain undocumented. If researchers, engineers, and policymakers systematically document these practices and test them scientifically, some of these could contribute to more practical and locally appropriate adaptation strategies.

The people of Sonailtala did not set out to conduct an experiment. They raised their homesteads because they needed to live there. A decade later, the mango trees growing on the raised land may be telling us something, but it is up to us to figure out exactly what it is.

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How much longer must we wait for press freedom?



Matiur Rahman is the editor and publisher of Prothom Alo.

■ MATIUR RAHMAN

On February 1, 1962, the first student strike and protest against Pakistan's military rule took place at the University of Dhaka. Among the many demands raised that day was a very simple but fundamental one: "We must have the right to speak. We must have freedom of the press." I was one of the participants in that day's demonstration.

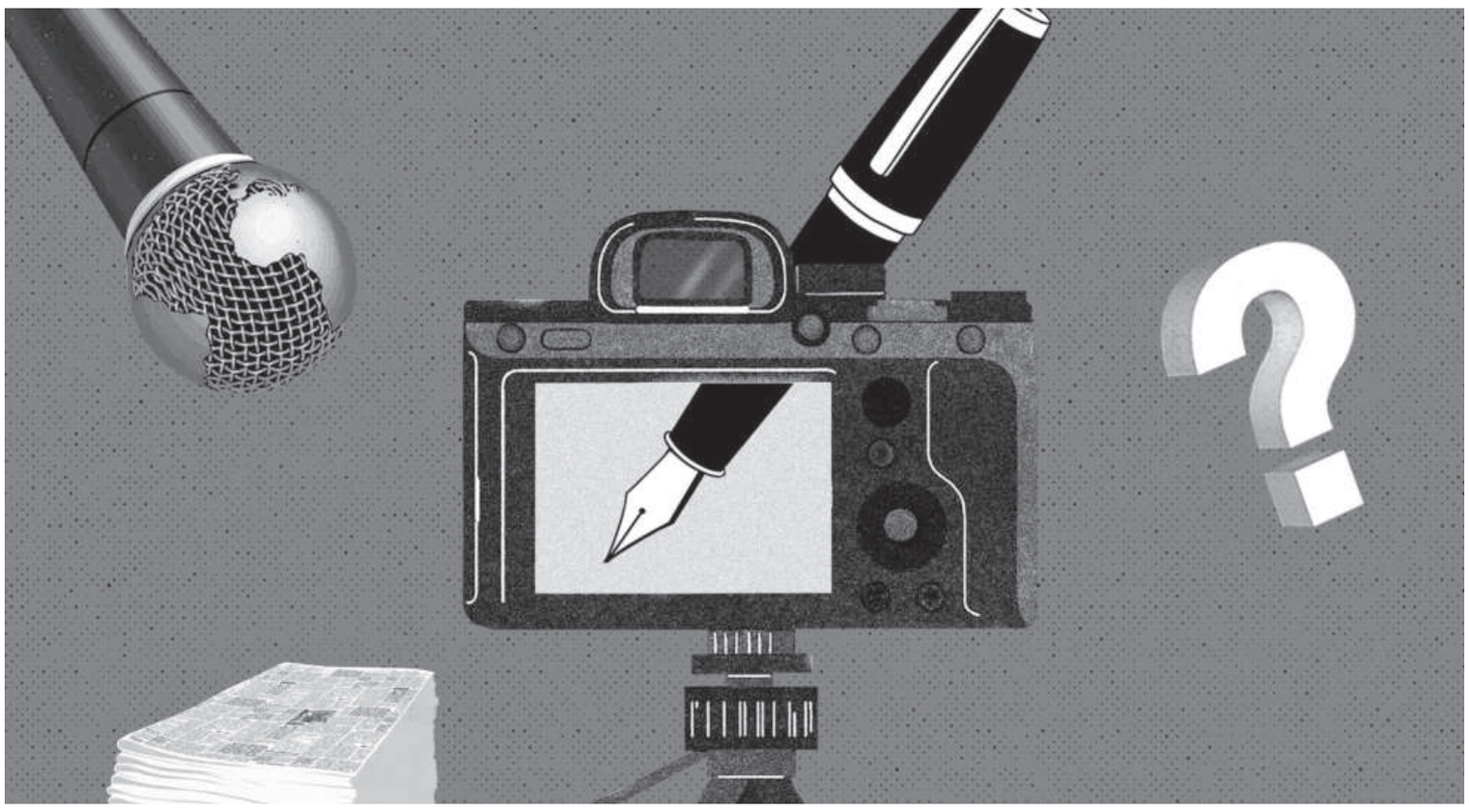
After that, through years of struggle and sacrifice, Bangladesh achieved independence. In the 55 years since then, the country has experienced many ups and downs. In July-August 2024, a nationwide mass uprising brought down an authoritarian ruler. It was an extraordinary and almost unbelievable moment in our history.

The interim government then ran the country for nearly 18 months. People had high expectations of that government, but in many respects, those were not fulfilled. There were initiatives towards political and constitutional reform, but many did not progress very far. Some important recommendations of the reform commissions were also not implemented.

During the interim government's tenure, newspapers, television channels, and other media outlets faced considerable difficulties in operating freely. Under various forms of pressure, media managements changed, editors were replaced, and many journalists were forced to leave their jobs. The media industry became quite unstable. As a result, newspapers and other media outlets often had to operate amid uncertainty and self-censorship.

Speaking from the experience of Prothom Alo, I can say that we, too, went through an atmosphere of fear. Throughout that period, we faced pressure and threats from extremist groups. Hateful propaganda was directed at The Daily Star and Prothom Alo, both inside the country and from abroad. In December 2025, extremists demonstrated in front of the Prothom Alo office for nearly seven days. These activities ultimately culminated in the burning and destruction of our office. On December 18, 2025, the Prothom Alo office remained on fire for almost the entire night. There was looting and destruction of property. Only after everything had been burned and damaged did law enforcement agencies clear the way for the fire brigade to arrive.

Those responsible within the government did not issue any direct or effective instructions to the police, Rab, or members of the armed forces to prevent the destruction. One or two advisers tried to intervene in their individual capacities, but those efforts were unsuccessful. After Prothom Alo, The Daily Star office was also blockaded and set on fire. Its employees were eventually brought out under extremely difficult and suffocating circumstances.



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

Although the interim government made various statements, there was no significant change in the situation facing the media. The government did, however, establish a Media Reform Commission that worked extensively on important issues concerning the media, proposing a range of short- and long-term measures. There was broad and positive consensus among journalists, editors, and media managers on many of these proposals. Unfortunately, the interim government took virtually no initiative to implement them.

After all these experiences, a general election was held on February 12, 2026. The administration, armed forces, and police worked together to conduct the election, while people across the country also wanted to see a credible election. BNP secured a major victory and returned to power after nearly 19 years. The important question before us now is: what direction will Bangladesh take after this change? More specifically, how will we ensure media freedom, the safety of journalists, and an environment in which an independent and responsible press can operate freely? That is the question that matters to all of us.

During BNP's two previous terms in government—from 1991 to 1996 and from 2001 to 2006—I was the editor of Bhorer Kagoj and then Prothom Alo, respectively. During both periods, we enjoyed considerable freedom in practising journalism. In particular, during the 2001-2006 government, we strongly criticised many of its policies and actions. Yet this did not prevent us from having access to the prime minister or other leaders. We were not subjected to major harassment or legal action simply because of our criticism.

I remember having heated arguments with Begum Khaleda Zia when she was prime minister. At times, both of us became quite agitated during our conversations. But I never had to face punishment for expressing my views. During that period, I also had disagreements and arguments with Tarique Rahman, then a young BNP leader. There were debates between us in newspaper pages as well. Those disagreements were ultimately resolved.

In contrast, during the previous authoritarian government, journalists and editors were imprisoned, with numerous cases filed against them. People were intimidated and threatened. Prothom Alo and I personally faced sustained pressure. Various efforts were made to reduce the newspaper's circulation. Government advertisements were withdrawn and, in August 2015, advertisements from around 50 domestic and international companies were also stopped. At one stage, the number of cases filed against me came close to 80. On March 30, 2023, a case was brought against me under the Digital Security Act.

In parliament, former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina described Prothom Alo as "an enemy of the Awami League, enemy of democracy, and enemy of the country." The journalists of Prothom Alo were also barred from entering the Prime Minister's Office and attending various national events. In early 2024, the military intelligence agency exerted tremendous pressure on the chief executive of our company to give up ownership of Prothom Alo. Behind that pressure was also an effort to remove the editor.

The situation reached such a point that, had that government remained in power for a few more months, the management of Prothom Alo could have been taken away from us, and I might no longer have been able to remain its editor.

Those experiences have left an indelible scar on our minds. After the authoritarian Awami League government's tenure and the multiple crises experienced during the interim government, the return of BNP to power has created a sense of optimism among the people. Given BNP's past experience with newspapers and the media, we hope that Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and his government will, during this important transitional period, continue to adopt a constructive attitude towards newspapers, television channels, and the broader media.

BNP's commitments concerning the media in its 31-point reform programme and election manifesto have strengthened this expectation. Point 11 of its 31-point programme specifically addresses the media. It proposes establishing a Media Commission to ensure full media freedom and comprehensive reform of the sector. It also commits to restoring an environment conducive to honest and independent journalism and protecting freedom of speech and expression. The programme proposes amendments to relevant laws and the repeal of laws that restrict fundamental rights, as well as steps to ensure justice in cases involving the killing and torture of journalists.

BNP's election manifesto also states that fearless and impartial journalism will be protected and recognised, and that objective criticism will be welcomed. It says that ensuring the professional independence and security of journalists who engage in constructive and objective criticism is a responsibility of the state. It also proposes legal mechanisms and a special cell to prevent the harassment and persecution of journalists.

These commitments are important. However, no significant steps have yet been taken to reform the newspaper industry and the broader media sector. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has expressed interest in introducing a system for auditing newspapers and clearing long-outstanding bills, but these initiatives have yet to be implemented. There was also a meeting to discuss urgent reforms needed in newspapers, television, and the wider media sector following the proposal to establish a Media Commission. Since then, however, we have heard little about the matter.

Over the past few months, there have also been reports of unwelcome interference and changes in the internal management of some newspapers and television channels. Some editors and senior journalists say they continue to operate under uncertainty and pressure. In some cases, journalists are exercising excessive caution over particular reports and opinion pieces. There are also concerns about the government's approach to the cyber law and the possibility that journalism and freedom of expression could be placed at risk under certain circumstances.

The government has completed only seven months of its tenure, so there is still considerable time ahead. But the urgent issues facing newspapers and the broader media sector need to be addressed without delay. Otherwise, we risk falling behind once again, and the freedom and aspirations of journalists could face another crisis.

In such a situation, I repeatedly find myself thinking of that day 64 years ago—February 1, 1962. That day, we raised the demand that we must have freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Through successive movements and struggles, Bangladesh's political circumstances have changed again and again. Governments have changed. Political leaders have changed. The political landscape has changed. But the fundamental issues underlying our demands seem to have remained largely where they were all those years ago. And that is deeply unfortunate.

After 64 years, we still have to speak about those demands. We still have to ask for them. We still have to remind those in power that freedom of speech and freedom of the press are not privileges, but fundamental rights.

At the end of my 56-year career in journalism, I find myself standing in the same place once again. So I end with the same question that has stayed with me since that day in 1962: how much longer will we have to wait?

This is a slightly abridged version of a speech that Matiur Rahman delivered on the second day of the recently held Bay of Bengal Conversation 2026, organised by the research institution Centre for Governance Studies (CGS).

Modernise flood damage assessments to protect haor farmers



Dr Niaz Md Farhat Rahman is principal scientific officer at the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) and was the team leader of the assessment discussed in this article. He can be reached at niaz.sust@gmail.com.

■ NIAZ MD FARHAT RAHMAN

Bangladesh's haor region is both an ecological treasure and one of the country's most important centres of Boro rice production. During the monsoon, its vast bowl-shaped depressions turn into an inland sea. In the dry season, the same landscape becomes an extensive agricultural zone on which millions of farmers, labourers, traders, and consumers depend.

This seasonal transformation also makes the haor exceptionally vulnerable. A few days of intense rainfall in Bangladesh and the upstream catchments of Meghalaya, Assam, and Tripura can rapidly raise river levels and inundate standing Boro rice shortly before harvest. By then, farmers have already invested heavily in seed, fertiliser, irrigation, labour, and machinery. A flood arriving even one or two weeks before harvesting can therefore wipe out an entire season's income.

In such circumstances, reliable estimates of loss and damage are essential for timely compensation, disaster-relief allocation, and recovery planning. Traditional field-based assessments are often slow and labour-intensive and may not capture the full extent of the damage. Satellite remote sensing, by contrast, can provide rapid and spatially detailed estimates of flood extent, damaged rice area, and associated losses.

The flash flood during the 2025–26 Boro season demonstrates how serious this risk has become. To the disaster scale, the Agromet Lab of the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) conducted a satellite-based assessment covering seven haor districts: Sunamganj, Netrokona, Kishoreganj, Habiganj, Sylhet, Moulvibazar, and Brahmanbaria.

The study estimated that 124,972 hectares were inundated, equivalent to 13.3 percent of the cultivated area. Nearly all of the flooded land (120,081 hectares, or 96.1 percent of total inundated land) consisted of active Boro rice fields. This means the flood primarily affected standing crops rather than uncultivated land. Sunamganj recorded the largest inundated area, followed by Habiganj and Moulvibazar.

The credibility of the satellite assessment is strengthened by its estimate of the total area under Boro cultivation. Remote-sensing analysis identified 940,004 hectares of active Boro rice across the seven districts, only 2.5 percent lower than the Department of Agricultural Extension's (DAE) estimate of 963,694 hectares. The two methods were therefore broadly consistent in identifying the overall cultivated area. However, notable district-level differences remained. DAE estimates were considerably higher in Netrokona and Moulvibazar, while satellite estimates were higher in Sylhet and Sunamganj.

Reliable estimates of loss and damage are essential for timely compensation, disaster-relief allocation, and recovery planning. Traditional field-based assessments are often slow and labour-intensive and may not capture the full extent of the damage. Satellite remote sensing, by contrast, can provide rapid and spatially detailed estimates of flood extent, damaged rice area, and associated losses.

The sharpest difference emerged in the assessment of flood damage. The satellite study estimated that 120,081 hectares of Boro rice were damaged, representing 12.77 percent of the area under cultivation. Sunamganj suffered the largest damaged area, at 43,797 hectares, followed by Habiganj with 24,576 hectares and Moulvibazar with 14,273 hectares.

By comparison, DAE reported a total of 65,236 hectares of damaged Boro rice, equivalent to a damage rate of 6.77 percent. The satellite estimate was therefore 1.84 times higher than the official field-based estimate. Although both approaches identified broadly similar affected districts, satellite mapping detected a much wider extent of crop damage.

The difference was equally significant in estimated production losses. Satellite analysis placed the loss at 508,856 tonnes of rice, compared with the DAE estimate of 288,783 tonnes. The satellite-based figure was 1.76 times higher, representing an additional loss of approximately 220,073 tonnes. The largest production loss occurred in Sunamganj, where an estimated 181,757 tonnes were lost. Habiganj followed with 104,693 tonnes, while Moulvibazar lost an estimated 58,090 tonnes. The satellite assessment also identified a broader high-loss zone than the one reflected in the official field reports.

The findings do not stand alone. The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) conducted an independent assessment using a different method. CPD estimated that 122,016 hectares of rice were damaged, remarkably close to the satellite estimate of 120,081 hectares. Both figures were almost twice the DAE estimate of 65,236 hectares. Production-loss estimates varied more widely. CPD estimated a loss of 339,449 tonnes of rice, while the satellite-based study estimated 508,856 tonnes and DAE reported 288,783 tonnes. Despite the differences, both independent assessments placed the loss above the official field estimate.

The agreement between the satellite study and CPD is particularly important. Both identified Sunamganj and Habiganj among the worst-affected districts and reached similar conclusions about the extent of cultivated and damaged rice areas. CPD also recommended using Sentinel satellite data to assess flood losses within 72 hours of an event, broadly supporting the approach applied in the study conducted by BRRI.

However, these comparisons should not be viewed simply as a dispute over which institution produced the correct number. Field surveys remain essential, particularly for identifying affected farmers, evaluating field-level crop conditions, and verifying losses. Immediately after a major flood, field officers often face serious constraints, including inundated roads, inaccessible villages, limited personnel, and pressure to submit estimates quickly. Satellite observations can provide a rapid and spatially comprehensive picture of inundation and crop damage.

Nevertheless, this approach also has limitations. Cloud cover may restrict optical imagery, classification methods may introduce uncertainty, and moderate-resolution images may miss small or fragmented fields. Production losses may also vary according to crop variety, growth stage, and field management. Most importantly, the BRRI assessment primarily captured losses to standing crops. Paddy that had already been harvested and was drying on threshing floors, roadsides, or homestead yards may also have been damaged or destroyed, but such losses fell outside the satellite estimate. The actual flood-related loss may therefore have been somewhat higher.

Hence, the takeaway is not that satellite analysis should replace field surveys. Rather, Bangladesh needs an integrated assessment system that combines the strengths of both. A standard post-flood protocol should be introduced under which preliminary satellite maps of inundation, damaged crop area, and likely production loss are produced within 72 hours. These findings should then be verified through rapid, statistically designed ground surveys and integrated with DAE records, digital land maps, and farmer databases.

Such a system would produce faster and more credible estimates while reducing the risk of omission, duplication, and arbitrary compensation. It would also help ensure that relief, financial assistance, and recovery support reach the farmers and locations that need them most.

Haor farmers cannot be protected from every flood, but they can and must be protected from delayed assessments, incomplete loss records, and poorly targeted assistance. The evidence from the 2025–26 flood shows that Bangladesh already has the technological capacity to improve the system. What is now required is the institutional commitment to use it.

BLENDER'S CHOICE –THE DAILY STAR OTT & DIGITAL CONTENT AWARDS 2025

Beyond the Award

Mehazabien Chowdhury's winning journey

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA





PHOTOS: STAR AND COLLECTED

For Mehazabien Chowdhury, Orpa was more than just another character; she was a dive into the darker corners of human nature and society. Her haunting portrayal in Vicky Zahed's ***Neel Shukh*** earned her the Best Actress (Popular) award at the Blender's Choice–The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2025, her second win in the category after ***Redrum*** in 2022.

Beyond the trophy, this year brought another first for the actress: a dance performance at the awards ceremony. In an interview with The Daily Star, Mehazabien opened up about the emotional depths of Orpa, the thrill of taking the stage, and her enduring on-screen chemistry with Afran Nisho.

"People often say that whenever I play a popular character, the audience loves me so much. But I believe that kind of response depends on the quality of the work," she said.

While the Popular category reflects audience appreciation, she pointed out that a project's reach does not necessarily determine its quality. "Unfortunately, many excellent projects never reach a wide audience," she added.

This year also saw Mehazabien take the stage at the ceremony for the first time. Although she had discussed performing in previous years, shooting schedules and limited rehearsal time had repeatedly stood in the way.

"This time, however, I had the time, and I thought, I have performed at so many places, so why not here?" she said.

Reflecting on the response to her dance performance, Mehazabien noted that social media comments do not always represent genuine audience reactions. "When someone says something to me personally or recalls a particular moment from a performance, I feel that they have watched it with genuine interest. I may not be a professional dancer, but I gave it my best," she said.

Her look for the evening was planned with the performance in mind. Wearing a black outfit by Maison Amali on the red carpet and performance attire by Celebrity's Choice, she kept her styling within a black-and-silver palette so the same makeup would complement both appearances.

Away from the spotlight, Mehazabien's husband, filmmaker Adnan Al Rajeev, remained part of her celebration. During her acceptance speech, she acknowledged his support, revealing that sending him a photograph while holding an award had become a ritual.

The evening also renewed interest in Mehazabien's much-loved on-screen pairing with Afran Nisho. Their matching black outfits caught fans' attention, although she said the coincidence was entirely unplanned. The two have not worked together since ***Punorjonmo 4*** in 2023, but the actress hopes they will collaborate again.

Yet, it was Orpa who remained at the heart of Mehazabien's latest achievement. The actress described the role as one of the most complex of her career, recalling that she and Vicky Zahed had discussed the project for years before it finally materialised.

Still, she had reservations about how audiences would respond to ***Neel Shukh***, especially its dark ending. She wondered whether viewers would accept a woman committing acts of violence for someone she loved as readily as they often accepted similar behaviour from male characters.

One scene that stayed with her features Orpa asking her aunt to place a matrimonial advertisement in the newspaper. She describes herself as a 27-year-old unmarried woman with few demands but insists that the advertisement mention her limp.

"While delivering those lines, I kept wondering how someone in that situation could find the strength to carry on in real life," she recalled.

The ending left an equally lasting impression. As Orpa rests Maruf's head on her shoulder and sings ***Phule Phule Dhole Dhole***, blood begins to pour from his mouth. The tenderness of the moment, set against its disturbing reality, made it particularly emotional for the actress.

For Mehazabien, taking on Orpa meant venturing beyond familiar territory. Her second Popular category win may have brought the recognition, but the character's emotional complexity is what made the journey memorable.



Three Dhallywood films set for Durga Puja release

Three Dhallywood films, ***Sneher Bondhon***, ***Cut-Piece*** and ***Chirkut***, are gearing up for theatrical release during Durga Puja, offering audiences stories of family relationships, power struggles and campus life.

Directed by Kamruzzaman, ***Sneher Bondhon*** stars Joy Chowdhury and Mou Khan and is scheduled for release on October 16.

Iffat Jahan Momo's ***Cut-Piece*** explores money, power and conflict surrounding the garment industry's fabric waste business, alongside family relationships.

Meanwhile, Muntasir Akib's ***Chirkut*** revisits Rajshahi University in the 1990s, exploring friendship, romance and nostalgia. Starring Shamol Mawla and Quazi Nawshaba Ahmed, the film also releases on October 16 exclusively at cineplexes and multiplexes.

EVENTS

'Khawabnama'

Prachyanat presents its 37th production, a grand theatrical adaptation of Akhteruzzaman Elias's seminal epic novel ***Khawabnama***. Directed by Kazi Toufikul Islam Emon, this powerful performance weaves history, myth, class struggle, Partition, and the Tebhaga movement—offering a profound, visually evocative journey into Bengal's socio-political psyche and collective dreams.

Date: Today | October 12, 2026
Time: 7:00pm onwards
Venue: National Theatre Hall, BSA



NEWS

Protests against polls chief

FROM PAGE 12

The national president of the left-wing All India Students' Association was among more than 2,000 activists detained on Saturday. Most of them were released late on Saturday night, police said.

Opposition parties and critics of Modi's government criticised what they said was the high-handed use of force against the protesters, while a UN body called on authorities to ensure that the right to peaceful assembly was respected and fulfilled.

India's foreign ministry said the UN's statement constituted "an unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of India."

At an unusually packed hearing yesterday, the Supreme Court recorded the government's assurance that lawyers and journalists would not be impeded while performing their duties.

Lawyers protesting outside the top court were detained briefly on Saturday, as were several reporters including a Reuters journalist.

Abhita Ruheja, a protester who was detained yesterday, said the authorities had turned Delhi into a fortress. "Is this how a democracy works? They have been scrapping rights after rights and this is turning into a dictatorship," she said.

Beware of 'coverts'

FROM PAGE 12

Tarique has already met district leaders division by division to discuss candidate selection.

MPs said Tarique had voiced concern about a possible future alignment between the "fascist" and "covert" forces, by which he meant Awami League and Jamaat-e-Islami.

To deal with such an alignment, the party chairman urged leaders to spend more time in their constituencies, reconnect with activists, and arrange programmes suited to local needs rather than rely solely on BNP HQ's directives, MPs said.

The attack, vandalism, and attempted takeover of the Radda MCH-FP Centre in Mirpur-1 also came up at the meeting. Tarique cited the incident as a warning against misconduct. BNP reserved-seat MP Ferdousy Ahmed had to resign amid allegations of having links with the incident.

"There is no place for extortionists and land grabbers in the BNP. The prime minister is very serious about this. No one will get away with extortion or wrongdoing," Chief Whip Nurul Islam Moni said.

Tarique also instructed lawmakers to take a tough stance against violence against women.

Lawmakers were asked to meet constituents, prevent abuse of power, and monitor the fair distribution of social safety-net benefits.

Tarique urged lawmakers to ensure peaceful Durga Puja celebrations by coordinating with local administrations, police, and Puja committees, supporting Hindu worshippers and reporting incidents to law enforcement instead of taking the law into their own hands.

"There was an old belief that Hindus always voted for the Awami League. But this time, they voted for the BNP. That is why the meeting instructed us to extend all kinds of support to them during their festival," one lawmaker said.

Tarique also advised lawmakers to observe National Revolution and Solidarity Day on November 7, taking local circumstances into consideration.

Lawmakers complained of poor coordination with deputy commissioners and upazila nirbahi officers, alleging that officials sometimes ignored their views.

Some also said proposed lists of fertiliser dealers had been changed to include different names.

One MP said he continued to face court appearances over politically motivated cases filed during the previous government.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said instructions had been issued regarding political cases filed since 2007 and advised lawmakers to contact the relevant authorities, noting that some might be unaware of the measures.

Several MPs raised concerns over drug trafficking and suspects securing bail soon after arrest, saying this undermined local efforts to control drug abuse.

Tarique acknowledged that law and order had not improved as expected despite government efforts.

Citing various challenges, including the "mobilisation of mobs against the government on social media", he urged lawmakers to remain prepared.

Power and Energy Minister Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku discussed improvements in electricity supply and gas exploration and drilling.

MPs were also urged to counter misleading claims and rumours about the economy and energy sector.

The meeting, attended by 194 MPs, covered the wider political situation and the challenge of keeping the party active while running the government.

Around 20 MPs and 10 ministers spoke, some submitting written statements, during an open discussion on national and local issues.

Tarique said he wanted more direct communication with lawmakers and to hear about their concerns.

Pakistan imposes emergency in KP

FROM PAGE 12

war against terrorism".

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a stronghold of Khan's PTI party, and the PTI-led government there will be sidelined under yesterday's extraordinary constitutional measures.

PTI chairman Gohar Ali Khan called the move "an extremely alarming and grave political mistake and an undemocratic measure".

"The people will never accept such actions against their rights," he posted on X.

PTI politician Junaid Akbar said on X that Sohail Afridi, the chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was arrested along with the party's president in the province.

Hasan 'let the ball do its job'

FROM PAGE 12

overturning the on-field decision on review.

The hattrick was the first by a Bangladeshi pacer and only the third by a Bangladesh bowler in Test cricket. Hasan was quick to acknowledge his teammates' support, particularly over the crucial review.

"Credit goes to the captain and Liton Das. They discussed it and corrected me, saying it was going to hit and that I could take the review. It feels amazing to get that kind of feedback from your teammates," he said.

Hasan later dismissed Yamin Ahmadzai to complete his five-wicket haul, reaching 50 Test wickets in the process.

The pacer also credited his partnership with Ebadot for helping Bangladesh wrap up Afghanistan's innings in the first session.

"Ebadot bhai gave us a good start, and then I bowled from the other end. We managed to bowl them out in the first session, which was a big plus for us," he said.

Bangladesh, who scored 346 in their first innings, ended the third day on 223 for six in their second innings, extending their overall lead to 329 and strengthening their grip on the match.

Hasan believes the job is not finished yet, with Bangladesh looking to add more runs and set Afghanistan a challenging target.

"Inshallah, tomorrow (Monday) we will try to score as many more runs as possible and set them a big target," he concluded.

Iran executes man for killing police officer

AFP, *Tehran*

Iranian authorities have executed a man for killing a police officer who was run over by a vehicle during clashes four years ago, the judiciary said yesterday.

The country has ramped up executions since the outbreak of the Middle East war in February and since anti-government protests erupted late last year.

"The death sentence for the killer of Reza Ehterami, a police officer serving in Iran's police emergency unit, has been carried out," the judiciary's Mizan Online website cited local prosecutor Aref Akbari as saying.

The execution went ahead after an investigation and trial, with the Supreme Court upholding the verdict, Akbari said.

The defendant, known in court as "Danial", was convicted of intentionally killing Ehterami, a third lieutenant serving with law enforcement in the southern city of Bandar Abbas.

Ehterami was killed in 2022 during clashes between police and fuel smugglers. He was run over by a vehicle driven by the defendant, according to previous reports from state media.

Iran executes more people every year than any country except China, according to rights groups including Amnesty International.

It imposes capital punishment for a range of offences, including murder.

Fuel prices in oil-rich Iran remain among the lowest in the world, encouraging widespread smuggling to neighbouring countries.

Last Ceuta migrant camp removed ahead of Spanish king's visit

AFP, *Ceuta*

Police yesterday cleared the last major migrant encampment in Ceuta, two days before a visit by Spain's king and queen, AFP reporters at the scene and the interior ministry said.

The camp sprang up after a mass influx of more than 70,000 people into the Spanish territory from neighbouring Morocco on July 30 and 31.

Although most returned to Morocco within days, thousands remained in Ceuta, sleeping rough in the streets or on beaches and straining the small city's resources.

The sudden influx, during which scores of people died, sparked alarm across the European Union and triggered a political crisis in Madrid.

Traumatised Panamanians begin quake recovery

AFP, *Chitré*

Residents near the epicenter of a major earthquake in southern Panama began cleaning up on Saturday, traumatized by the previous day's strong shaking that left widespread damage but so far no reported deaths.

"This is something we've never seen before. We weren't prepared for this kind of event," said Aldulfo Quintero as he cleared debris from a store in Chitre, about 250 kilometers (155 miles) southwest of Panama City.

Four placed on remand

FROM PAGE 12

accused went to the spot. Accused Rimi smeared black ink over the mural depicting Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath. She also attempted to incite religious hatred in connection with the upcoming Durga Puja, thereby creating discord and undermining communal harmony."

On October 5, the DSCC cleared the footpath in Segunbagicha of encroachments. Subsequently, portraits of 10 prominent figures who made significant contributions to the country's art, literature, and culture were painted on the adjacent wall.

The figures include Rabindranath, National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, artist Zainul Abedin, and filmmaker Satyajit Ray.



Demonstrators march as they take part in a protest in Manhattan in response to a recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) shooting in the Bronx, in New York City, US on Saturday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Padma erosion uproots 1,803 families in two years

JAHID HASAN, *Shariatpur*

At least 1,803 families from five villages in Purba Naodoba union of Shariatpur's Zajira upazila have been displaced by Padma river erosion over the past two years, while around 150 more families remain at risk.

Of those displaced, 303 families have lost their homes in Alam-Khankandi village since August this year alone, according to the Shariatpur Water Development Board and Purba Naodoba Union Parishad.

The union, located on a char (shoal) near the Padma Bridge, comprises six villages.

During a visit on Saturday, this correspondent found several families preparing to leave after losing their homes and farmland to erosion.



PHOTO: STAR

Many families sheltering in roadside shanties.

Some were living in makeshift roadside shanties, while others planned to cross the Padma by engine-run trawlers to Zajira or Munshiganj.

Duluna Begum, 60, who came from Munshiganj to help her daughter relocate, said the family had lost nine bighas of cropland to erosion in the past five days.

Md Shahid Fakir, 38, who once owned 25 bighas of land and cultivated various crops, said he had lost everything to erosion over the years.

Purba Naodoba Union Parishad Chairman Altaf Hossain Khan said erosion had displaced around 1,500 families from Ahammad Majhikandi, Mongol Majhikandi, Alim Uddin Beparikandi and Majhikandi villages last year.

Contacted, Md Milton Hossain, WDB executive engineer in Shariatpur, said, "Protecting the mainland is our priority in cases of river erosion, so it is often not possible to take measures in char areas."

"We will inspect the area and take necessary steps, subject to approval from higher authorities," he added.

A step towards justice, but the pain remains

FROM PAGE 3

"My mother is still unable to return to normal after losing my younger brother Mugdho. He and Snigdho were my twin brothers. Their birthday was two days ago, but my mother did not celebrate it, even for Snigdho, because of Mugdho's death," Dipto said.

Mugdho became widely known for distributing water to protesters during the uprising before being shot dead. His family continues to mourn the son and brother whose absence has changed their lives.

The tribunal yesterday framed two charges of crimes against humanity over allegations that police officers, senior officials, local Awami League leaders and armed party activists indiscriminately fired on unarmed protesters in Uttara on July 18 and 19, 2024, killing 11 people and seriously injuring six others.

Among those killed was ride-sharing driver Mokhlesur Rahman Durjoy, who was allegedly run over by an armoured personnel carrier.

According to the prosecution, his body was kept at Uttara East Police Station before being dumped in the Turag to conceal the killing.

The prosecution alleged that former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, former police chief Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun and other senior officials oversaw the crackdown on orders from then PM Sheikh Hasina to suppress the uprising at any cost.

The accused include former AL lawmaker Mohammad Habib Hasan, former DMP commissioner Habibur Rahman and 24 other police officials and AL and its affiliated organisations' members. The tribunal read out the charges in the presence of eight accused, while the remaining 18 are absconding. All eight pleaded not guilty and sought justice.

The tribunal fixed November 4 for the prosecution's opening statement and testimony of its first witness, marking the start of the trial.

Scrap unnecessary AL-era projects

FROM PAGE 3

of rural roads and other infrastructure projects.

Regarding local government elections, Habib said the committee believed law enforcement agencies were not yet fully prepared, psychologically and operationally, to conduct the polls.

"For this reason, we have suggested allowing some time before announcing the election schedule. At the same time, we have said that the elections should be held as soon as possible," he said.

He expressed hope that the elections would be held early next year.

On dengue, Habib said cleanliness drives were underway nationwide following the prime minister's launch of a campaign from the South Plaza of parliament.

To prevent dengue and control Aedes mosquitoes, the committee recommended that UNOs supervise cleanliness campaigns in their respective areas and take necessary steps to raise public awareness.

EC to unveil UP polls roadmap

FROM PAGE 3

policy bars holders of profit-making positions from running.

"We want to ensure that no one holds two positions simultaneously," he said, adding that the EC had proposed amendments to the government but no decision had been made.

Masud said the upcoming UP elections would proceed under the existing legal framework, even if amendments were made during the polls.

Regarding elections to municipalities, upazila parishads and city corporations, Election Commissioner Anwarul Islam Sarkar said no final decision had been made.

Why dengue cases remain low in Sylhet, Rangpur

FROM PAGE 3

Sylhet reported 1,435 cases and one death, while Rangpur recorded 5,540 cases and 10 deaths.

In 2025, the country recorded 1,02,861 cases and 413 deaths, including 426 cases and two deaths in Sylhet and 1,061 cases and no deaths in Rangpur. A similar trend was observed in 2024.

Mahbubul Alam, Sylhet divisional director of DGHS, attributed the division's lower dengue burden to heavy rainfall, mosquito-control programmes and the near absence of Aedes aegypti mosquitoes.

Sylhet receives around 5,500mm of annual rainfall, which keeps water flowing and reduces stagnation and mosquito breeding, he said.

He said most dengue patients admitted to Sylhet hospitals had travelled to Dhaka, suggesting they contracted the disease there.

He also credited city corporations' cleaning and mosquito-control drives with limiting mosquito populations.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman, an associate professor in the Department of Zoology at the National University of Bangladesh, said Rangpur's relatively low urbanisation, limited industrial development and lower population movement could explain its lower dengue burden.

"Urbanisation and dengue transmission are closely linked. In urban areas, sites with stagnant water are more common, which create an ideal environment for mosquito breeding," he said.

"This can explain Rangpur's lower dengue burden compared to neighbouring Rajshahi division, where urbanisation is increasing," he added.

Wazed Ali, Rangpur divisional director of DGHS, cited limited travel between Rangpur and dengue hotspots such as Dhaka, along with lower Aedes mosquito density, as possible reasons.

In contrast, Saifur said coastal areas such as Khulna and Barishal offered more favourable conditions for Aedes mosquito breeding.

Salinity often forces households to store water in containers and tanks, creating potential breeding sites, particularly in large containers that are difficult to clean regularly, he said.

High humidity and rainfall also favour mosquito breeding in coastal areas, he added.

This year, Khulna recorded the second-highest caseload and death toll after Dhaka, while Barishal ranked fourth in both categories.

PRAYER TIMING
OCTOBER 12

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	4-40	12-45	4-15	5-45	7-15
JAMAAT	5-20	1-15	4-30	5-50	7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ, স্থানীয় সরকার পল্লী উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় মন্ত্রণালয়, স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ (জেলা পরিষদ শাখার), ১৯.০৫.২০২৬খ্রিঃ তারিখের ৪৬.০০.০০০০.০৪২.১১.০০৬.১৮.৯৫২ নম্বর স্মারকের ছাড়পত্রের আলোকে হবিগঞ্জ জেলা পরিষদের সাংগঠনিক কাঠামোভুক্ত নিম্নবর্ণিত শূন্য পদে ২০২৬ সনের জাতীয় বেতন স্কেল অনুযায়ী অস্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে বাংলাদেশের স্থায়ী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে শর্ত সাপেক্ষে দরখাস্ত আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

ক্রঃ নং	পদের নাম	পদের সংখ্যা	বেতন স্কেল	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা
০১	সাঁটলিপিকার	০১	২৪০০০-৫৮০০০/- (গ্রেড-১৩)	উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট অথবা সমমানের শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা এবং তৎসহ ইংরেজীতে দ্রুতলিপি প্রতি মিনিটে ১০০ শব্দ এবং মুদ্রাক্ষরিক প্রতি মিনিটে ৫০ শব্দ এবং বাংলায় দ্রুতলিপি প্রতি মিনিটে ৭০ শব্দ ও মুদ্রাক্ষরিক প্রতি মিনিটে ৩৫ শব্দের যোগ্যতাসহ কম্পিউটার চালনায় প্রয়োজনীয় দক্ষতা থাকতে হবে। বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও বয়স সীমা শিথিলযোগ্য।
০২	উচ্চমান সহকারী	০১	২৩৫০০-৫৬৮০০/- (গ্রেড-১৪)	কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে স্নাতক অথবা সমমানের ডিগ্রী এবং দাপ্তরিক চিঠিপত্র লিখন কাজে অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।
০৩	নিম্নমান সহকারী কাম মুদ্রাক্ষরিক/ কম্পিউটার অপারেটর	০১	২১৯০০-৫২৯০০/- (গ্রেড-১৬)	(ক) উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট অথবা সমমানের শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা থাকতে হবে। (খ) ইংরেজী প্রতি মিনিটে ৪০ শব্দ এবং বাংলায় প্রতি মিনিটে ৩০ শব্দ টাইপ করার যোগ্যতা।
০৪	অফিস সহায়ক	০১	২০০০০-৪৮৪০০/- (গ্রেড-২০)	কোন স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে মাধ্যমিক স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট অথবা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ।

শর্তাবলীঃ

০১। আবেদনকারীকে বাংলাদেশের স্থায়ী বাসিন্দা ও নাগরিক হতে হবে।

০২। আবেদনকারীকে সরকার কর্তৃক নির্ধারিত ০১(এক) পাতার চাকুরির আবেদন ফরমে আবেদন করতে হবে। উক্ত আবেদন ফরম জেলা পরিষদ, হবিগঞ্জের ওয়েবসাইট (www.zphabiganj.gov.bd) এবং জনপ্রশাসন মন্ত্রণালয়ের ওয়েবসাইট (www.mopa.gov.bd) ও (www.forms.gov.bd) এ পাওয়া যাবে।

০৩। প্রার্থীর আবেদন পত্রে নিম্নলিখিত তথ্যাদি উল্লেখ থাকতে হবে ঃ
(ক) প্রার্থীর নাম (খ) পিতা/স্বামীর নাম (গ) মাতার নাম (ঘ) স্থায়ী ঠিকানা (ঙ) বর্তমান ঠিকানা (চ) জন্ম তারিখ (ছ) প্রার্থীর বয়স ১১/১১/২০২৬ খ্রিঃ তারিখে ১৮-৩২ বছরের মধ্যে হতে হবে। আবেদন পত্র গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ পর্যন্ত চাকুরিতে প্রবেশের বয়স সংক্রান্ত সর্বশেষ জারিকৃত প্রজ্ঞাপন/বিধি কার্যকর হবে। বয়সের ক্ষেত্রে কোন এফিডেভিট গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না। (জ) জাতীয়তা (ঝ) শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা (ঞ) মোবাইল নম্বর (ট) কোটা (যদি থাকে) (ঠ) অভিজ্ঞতা (যদি থাকে)।

০৪। দরখাস্তের সাথে নিম্নবর্ণিত কাগজপত্রাদি সংযুক্ত করতে হবে ঃ
(ক) প্রথম শ্রেণির গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত (নামাঙ্কিত সীলসহ) সকল পরীক্ষার সনদ এর ফটোকপি।
(খ) প্রথম শ্রেণির গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত সদ্য তোলা পাসপোর্ট আকারের ৪ (চার) কপি ছবি।
(গ) প্রথম শ্রেণির গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত চারিত্রিক সনদ পত্র।
(ঘ) প্রার্থীর নিজ এলাকার ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ/পৌরসভা/সিটি কর্পোরেশন কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত নাগরিকত্ব সনদ।
(ঙ) প্রথম শ্রেণির গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত জাতীয় পরিচয় পত্র/জন্ম নিবন্ধন সনদ।
(চ) প্রথম শ্রেণির গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক কম্পিউটার প্রশিক্ষণের সত্যায়িত সনদ।
(ছ) আবেদনপত্রের সাথে ২০০/- টাকা মূল্যের অফেরতযোগ্য ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা, জেলা পরিষদ, হবিগঞ্জ এর অনুকূলে জমা দিতে হবে।
(জ) যোগাযোগের ঠিকানাসহ লিখিত ফেরত খাম ৯.৫০" x ৪.৫০" সাইজের এবং ১২ (বারো) টাকার ডাকটিকেট সংযুক্ত করতে হবে।

০৫। খামের উপর পদের নাম উল্লেখ পূর্বক সরকার কর্তৃক চাকুরির নির্ধারিত আবেদন ফরম প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা, জেলা পরিষদ, হবিগঞ্জ বরাবর আগামী ১২/১১/২০২৬খ্রিঃ তারিখ অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ের মধ্যে ডাকযোগে পৌঁছাতে হবে। সরাসরি কোন আবেদন গ্রহণ করা হবে না। নির্ধারিত তারিখের পর প্রাপ্ত আবেদন গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।

০৬। (ক) মুক্তিযোদ্ধা, শহিদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধা ও বীরঙ্গনার প্রমাণক হিসেবে সরকারের সর্বশেষ নির্দেশনা মোতাবেক উপযুক্ত কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সনদ থাকতে হবে।
(খ) মুক্তিযোদ্ধা, শহিদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধা ও বীরঙ্গনার সন্তানদের এবং মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সঙ্গে আবেদনকারীর সম্পর্ক উল্লেখপূর্বক সংশ্লিষ্ট ইউনিয়ন পরিষদের চেয়ারম্যান, সিটি করপোরেশনের ওয়ার্ড কাউন্সিলর, পৌরসভার মেয়র/প্রশাসক ও পৌরসভার কাউন্সিলর কর্তৃক সার্টিফিকেট থাকতে হবে।
(গ) চাকুরীতে নিয়োগের পূর্বে পুলিশ ভেরিফিকেশন সম্পন্ন করতে হবে এবং উক্ত পুলিশ ভেরিফিকেশন ফরমে মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধার পুত্র কন্যার সম্পর্কিত একটি ঘর/কলাম সংযোজন করতে হবে। পুলিশ ভেরিফিকেশন রিপোর্টের তথ্য ও সার্টিফিকেটের তথ্য গড়মিল পরিলক্ষিত হলে নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ এ বিষয়ে তদন্ত করে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ করবেন।

০৭। নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/ক্ষুদ্র নৃ-গোষ্ঠী/ শারীরিক প্রতিবন্ধী ও তৃতীয় লিঙ্গ কোটাসহ সরকার নির্ধারিত সকল কোটা সংরক্ষণ করা হবে। সরকার নির্ধারিত কোটায় আবেদনকারী সম্পর্কে যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক জারীকৃত সনদপত্র থাকতে হবে। নির্ধারিত কোটায় যোগ্য প্রার্থী না পাওয়া গেলে সংশ্লিষ্ট কোটার শুন্য পদসমূহ সাধারণ মেধা তালিকা হইতে পূরণ করা হইবে।

০৮। মৌখিক পরিক্ষার সময় সকল সনদপত্রের মূলকপি উপস্থাপন করতে হবে এবং প্রথম শ্রেণীর কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত ০১ সেট ফটোকপি দাখিল করতে হবে।

০৯। চাকুরীর শর্তাবলী বেতন/ভাতা/অন্যান্য সুযোগ-সুবিধার ক্ষেত্রে জেলা পরিষদ আইন-২০০০(সংশোধিত-২০২২) এবং স্থানীয় সরকার (জেলা পরিষদ কর্মকর্তা/কর্মচারী) চাকুরী বিধিমালা-১৯৯০ এবং সরকার কর্তৃক সময় সময় জারীকৃত নির্দেশাবলী প্রযোজ্য হবে।

১০। নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে কোন জটিলতা সৃষ্টি হলে নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত গঠিত জেলা পরিষদ কর্মচারী নিয়োগ ও পদোন্নতি সংক্রান্ত বাছাই কমিটির সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।

১১। চাকুরীরত প্রার্থীদের তাদের আবেদনপত্র যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে নির্ধারিত সময়ের মধ্যে অত্রাফিসে দাখিল করতে হবে। কোন অগ্রীম কপি গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।

১২। চাকুরীতে যোগদানের পূর্বে সিভিল সার্জন কর্তৃক স্বাস্থ্য পরীক্ষা সম্পন্ন করে ফিটনেস সার্টিফিকেট দাখিল করতে হবে। কোন তথ্য গোপন করলে/ভুল তথ্য প্রদান করলে/পুলিশ ভেরিফিকেশন সন্তোষজনক না হলে চাকুরিতে নিয়োগপ্রাপ্ত হলেও সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রার্থীর নিয়োগ বাতিল করে তার বিরুদ্ধে আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।

১৩। আবেদনপত্র সমূহ বাছাইয়ের পর সঠিক পাওয়া গেলে প্রার্থীকে নির্বাচনী পরীক্ষার জন্য বিবেচনা করা হবে। পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য কোন প্রকার টিএ/ডিএ দেয়া হবে না।

১৪। অসম্পূর্ণ/ত্রুটিযুক্ত/নির্ধারিত তারিখের পরে প্রাপ্ত আবেদনপত্র সরাসরি বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে। এ বিষয়ে কোন আপত্তি উত্থাপন করা যাবে না।

১৫। জেলা পরিষদ নিয়োগ কর্তৃপক্ষ প্রয়োজনে কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে এ নিয়োগ বা যে কোন/সকল আবেদনপত্র বাতিল করতে পারবেন অথবা এ বিষয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষন করেন।

১৬। নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত তথ্যাদি জেলা পরিষদ এর ওয়েব সাইট www.zphabiganj.gov.bd থেকে জানা যাবে।

(অরুন কৃষ্ণ পাল)
প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা (ভাঃ)
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GD-2466

Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development in Bangladesh Project (LCUD)
Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA)
Level 9 & 10, Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB), Ramna, Dhaka

Expressions of Interest (EoI) for Services

	GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH		
1.	Ministry/Division	Power Division	
2.	Agency	International Organization	
3.	Name of Procuring Entity	Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development (LCUD) Bangladesh	
4.	Title of Service	Individual Consultant- Finance & Account Associate -Time Based	
5.	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka	
6.	Expression of Interest for Selection of	Individual Consultant	Time - Based
7.	EoI Ref. No.	27.02.0000.000.023.14.0013.26.125	
8.	Date	07 October 2026	
	KEY INFORMATION		
9.	Procurement Sub-Method	Selection of Individual Consultants (SIC)	
	FUNDING INFORMATION		
10.	Budget and Source of funds	Development Budget	
11.	Development Partner	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), GEF	
	PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
12.	Project/Programme Code	224417700	
13.	Project/Programme Name	Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development (LCUD) Bangladesh	
14.	EoI Closing Date and time	05 November 2026, Time: 15:00 (BST)	
	INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT		
16.	Brief Description of the Assignment	Overall management and coordination of all activities for Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development (LCUD) Bangladesh	
17.	Qualification and Experienced Required	Details is in the ToR, which is in SREDA website, (Notice Section & Project Box). SREDA website: www.sreda.gov.bd	
18.	Other Details	Details is in the SREDA website, (Notice Section & respective Project Box in SREDA website: www.sreda.gov.bd	
19.	Association with foreign firms is	Not Applicable	
	PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS		
20.	Name of the Official Inviting EoI	Engr. Md. Muzibur Rahman	
21.	Designation of the Official Inviting EoI	Project Director, LCUD Bangladesh	
22.	Address of the Official Inviting EoI	Level 9 & 10, IEB, Ramna, Dhaka	
23.	Contact Details of the Official Inviting EoI	02-55110343, lcud2024@gmail.com	
24.	Submission Procedure	Interested parties are requested to submit the EoI in person in the EoI Box at the SREDA office or Via email, if the EoI is submitted by email, the subject line must be clearly specified.	
	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any all EoI(s).		

Sd/-
Engr. Md. Muzibur Rahman
Project Director, LCUD

GD-2469

Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development in Bangladesh Project (LCUD)
Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA)
Level 9 & 10, Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB), Ramna, Dhaka

Expressions of Interest (EoI) for Services

	GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH		
1.	Ministry/Division	Power Division	
2.	Agency	International Organization	
3.	Name of Procuring Entity	Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development (LCUD) Bangladesh	
4.	Title of Service	Individual Consultant- Admin and Logistics Associate - Time Based	
5.	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka	
6.	Expression of Interest for Selection of	Individual Consultant	Time - Based
7.	EoI Ref. No.	27.02.0000.000.023.14.0013.26.126	
8.	Date	07 October 2026	
	KEY INFORMATION		
9.	Procurement Sub-Method	Selection of Individual Consultants (SIC)	
	FUNDING INFORMATION		
10.	Budget and Source of funds	Development Budget	
11.	Development Partner	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), GEF	
	PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
12.	Project/Programme Code	224417700	
13.	Project/Programme Name	Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development (LCUD) Bangladesh	
14.	EoI Closing Date and time	05 November 2026, Time: 15:00 (BST)	
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17.	Qualification and Experienced Required	Details is in the ToR, which is in SREDA website, (Notice Section & Project Box). SREDA website: www.sreda.gov.bd	
18.	Other Details	Details is in the SREDA website, (Notice Section & respective Project Box). SREDA website: www.sreda.gov.bd	
19.	Association with foreign firms is	Not Applicable	
	PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS		
20.	Name of the Official Inviting EoI	Engr. Md. Muzibur Rahman	
21.	Designation of the Official Inviting EoI	Project Director, LCUD Bangladesh	
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24.	Submission Procedure	Interested parties are requested to submit the EoI in person in the EoI Box at the SREDA office or Via email, if the EoI is submitted by email, the subject line must be clearly specified.	
	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any all EoI(s).		

Sd/-
Engr. Md. Muzibur Rahman
Project Director, LCUD

GD-2470

Slave raids in Bengal and the making of Arakan's power

RILA MUKHERJEE

Slave raiding arose from expansionary trends that transformed Arakan from a conquest state into a trading state. While commerce is generally suggested as the chief reason for this transformation, we will argue that territorial acquisition, military compulsion, ethnic contestation and cultural differences also played significant roles in the process. A power like Arakan, which had failed to adopt new productive technologies, had to turn to slave raiding in response to the demands of warfare and the money market.

I

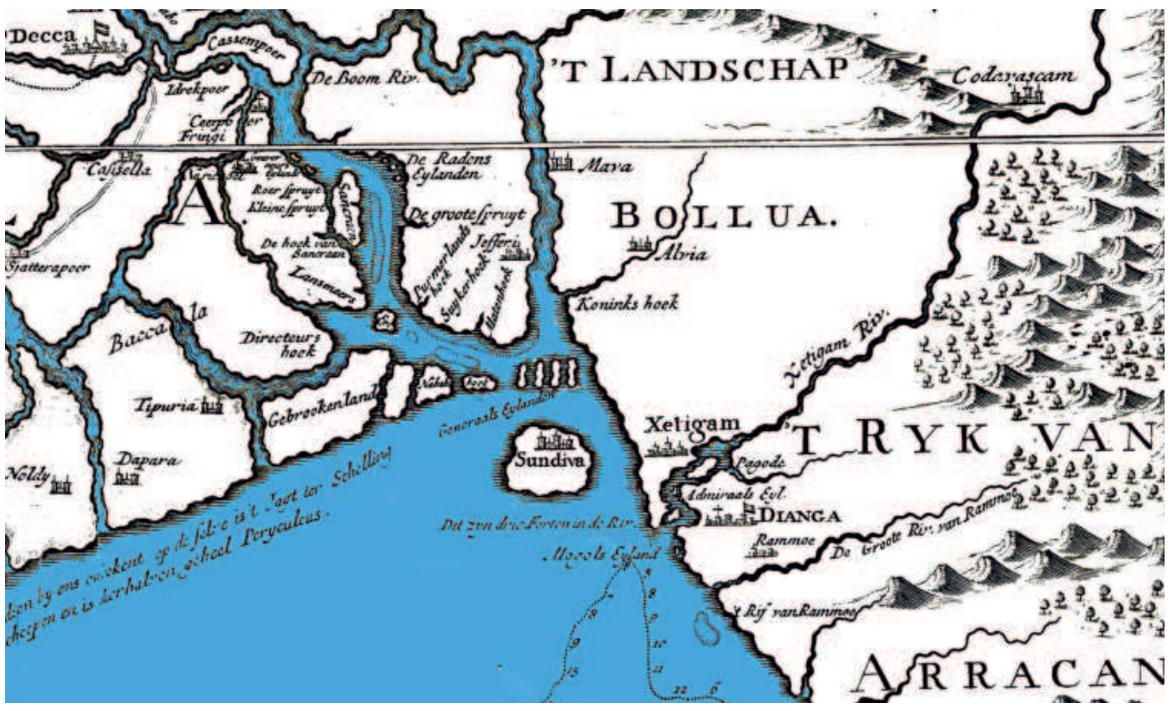
Arakan had to depend on systems of trading and raiding for the development of its statecraft and social structure. However, from the 1590s to the 1650s, Ayutthaya's aggressive commercial policies under Naresuen, Songtham and Prasart Thong threatened Arakan's Bay of Bengal trade. A proactive mercantile policy that would bring in enough silver to enable participation in the larger eastern Indian Ocean trade was the only way out.

Arakan's slave trade had both international and domestic components. It was propelled into this trade by external compulsions (the need for silver through international trade) and internal pressures (expansionary wars and financial deficits) during the seventeenth century. Initially, as a landlocked country with an inhospitable coastline, Arakan held little interest for European traders.

Tomé Pires, writing around 1515, and Alexander Hamilton, writing in the 1690s, noted that it had good harbours but offered little in the way of commerce.



A seventeenth-century engraving depicting Boungdet Harbour and a trading post near Mrauk U, the capital of the Arakanese kingdom, in 1663. Illustration: Wouter Schouten, Oost-Indische voyagie.



An eighteenth-century Dutch map showing the coastal region between Bengal and Arakan, including Chittagong, Dianga, Sandwip and Dhaka, published in François Valentyn's Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën (1724–1726). Map: J. van Braam and G. onder de Linden.

Apart from elephants from the interior and rice from the coastal plains, Arakan had few commodities to trade. Moreover, in the absence of an irrigated wet-rice core, its agrarian base was unstable, and its rice supply was uncertain because of frequent flooding in the Kaladan and Lemro river basins.

The Portuguese avoided Arakan, preferring, under the terms of their 1559 treaty, to use the ports of southeastern Bengal. The Dutch maintained a regular factory at Mrauk U only from the 1620s. At this point, a marketable commodity entered the picture: slaves. Raiding thus became a means for Arakan to sustain itself. Subsequent Portuguese and Dutch demand for slaves saw Hugli, Pipli, Chittagong-Dianga, Sandwip and Mrauk U supplying enslaved people to Goa in the west and Batavia in the east.

II

There was also a political factor. Arakan needed arms because its borders were vulnerable to assaults from the Toungoos to its south and the Mughals to its west. Between 1599 and 1610, Arakan undertook its greatest territorial expansion with the assistance of Portuguese mercenaries. This expansion proceeded in two directions: into the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta and towards the lower Irrawaddy delta, which was under the control of the Toungoo rulers of Lower Burma. This brought Arakan into direct conflict with the Mughals and the Burmese.

Driven by a war economy, Arakan imported guns and slaves in increasingly large numbers. Peasants were turned into soldiers. In 1605, the rebel officer Min-kamaun turned 5,000 Bengali and Mon cultivators assigned to the Thinkyin pagoda into warriors and attempted to seize Mrauk U. Three or four thousand Bengalis fled with their families into the eastern hill country (the Shan States) in the aftermath of Min-kamaun's campaign.

Arakan's raids continued southwards. King Thalun (r. 1629–1648) of the restored Toungoo state of Burma stationed warships as far north as Prome to deter Arakanese penetration. When he returned to Ava from Pegu in 1635, Thalun brought with him Mons, Burmese, Shans, Siamese, Indians, Yuns and Tavoyans and settled them on village lands allotted in return for military service. As the Toungoos reconsolidated their position, Arakan was pushed onto the defensive. Its treasury was exhausted, and alternative sources of finance had to be found.

III

Closer to home, regional circumstances also changed. As the Arakanese Maghs confronted the Turkic Mughals, a cultural collision between a minor coastal power and a mighty agrarian behemoth became inevitable. When Arakanese captives were presented to him at court in 1613, Jahangir noted: 'they are a bunch of animals that look like human beings. They eat every part of every kind of sea and land animal and in their religion nothing is forbidden'. The larger resources at the Mughals' command (the Azo and Ahom campaigns of the 1660s involved 300,000 cavalry, 500,000 foot soldiers, elephants, camels and cannons, all sustained by numerous slaves), new methods of warfare (horses, artillery and cannons, as opposed to elephants and boats), new agrarian techniques and a fiscal policy that worked to the detriment of Bay of Bengal trade highlighted the differences between the two powers.

The unequal relationship became manifest when Thiri Thudhamma (r. 1622–1638) ascended the throne. During Mughal subahdar Fidai Khan's tenure in the 1630s, the southeast became a war zone. The region was assigned as jagir, and practically no revenue was remitted to Delhi. At the height of their power, when Islamic cultural influence was supposed to be predominant at court, Arakanese kings no longer felt it necessary to proclaim their universalism by adopting Muslim names. From 1634 onwards, the practice of minting coins in Bengali, Persian and Arakanese was discontinued. Henceforth, only Arakanese was used.

Arakan's view of dwadas Bangla (the twelve delta polities) as part of its realm was a source of antagonism. In fact, it claimed territory extending as far as Kolkata and Murshidabad. The raids can thus be seen as an assertion of a former regional status based on Arakan's integration into maritime and trans-Yoma networks, as well as a military ideology grounded in a vision of past territorial grandeur. The notion of a fixed border, an inevitable corollary of Mughal expansion, and the premise that Arakan breached it through its slave raids were simply unacceptable to Arakan, because it viewed territory as a fluid mandala. Naramitlha had surrendered dwadas Bangla in return for the Bengal sultan's help in regaining his throne; when he was restored in 1428, the debt was paid, and he wanted the territories back. Nevertheless, while the sultanate lasted, relations remained amicable, and the sixteenth century saw no raids. But as the Mughals advanced into the delta, their civilisational rhetoric, closely bound up with their notion of territory (mulk, mamlikat), alienated Arakan. The promotion of Bengali literature and anti-Mughal rhetoric among Arakan's Buddhists and Muslims can be seen as attempts by Arakan to build on regional Bengali sentiments to counter Mughal expansion.

The promotion of Bengali literature and anti-Mughal rhetoric among Arakan's Buddhists and Muslims can be seen as attempts by Arakan to build on regional Bengali sentiments to counter Mughal expansion.

The intensification of Magh raids was therefore a response to challenges to Arakan's authority in the region. Despite their rhetoric and manpower, the Mughals could not stop the raids. The Mughal chronicler Shihabuddin Talish even commented that a hundred Mughal boats would flee if they sighted as few as four Arakanese boats!

IV

The ethnic factor was important in military reconfigurations and left its imprint on society. In 1638, Narapati of Arakan placed many Chittagong Muslims in his army to confront the Mughal subahdar, Islam Khan Mashadi. In 1644, he expelled Chittagong's inhabitants and resettled them in Dhanyawaddy. A document from Chittagong dated June 1777 noted that 'almost three fourths of the inhabitants of Rekheng are said to be natives of Bengal; or descendants of such'.

A study of the composition of Arakan's army reveals how various ethnic groups sustained its war machine. The army consisted of some 40,000 to 50,000 men between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, including Rakhine, Bengali, Sak, Pathan, Persian and Moor soldiers. When Pegu was invaded in 1598–99, 65 per cent of the army was composed of non-ethnic Rakhines: Bengalis accounted for 16 per cent, Thets 13 per cent, Kanrans 10 per cent, and mercenaries and vassals 26 per cent.

Jacques Leider demonstrated how the army's composition changed over time. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it was mainly Arakanese, supplemented by some mountain peoples and Bengali mercenaries. During the sixteenth century, the army incorporated greater numbers of Portuguese mercenaries, and after Pegu's defeat, a large number of Mons entered its ranks. In the seventeenth century, the army was staffed by Bengali Muslim mercenaries. At the time of the Bhulua campaign of 1610, the army numbered 60,000, equivalent to almost 40 per cent of the population. Guns were also imported in increasingly large numbers.

From the end of the sixteenth century, a shortage of bullion affected the entire Bay of Bengal world. During the seventeenth century, this scarcity became acute. Since the state did not have enough money to buy arms and pay its mercenaries, alternative sources of funding had to be found. The army was financed through grants of customs duties and rights to participate in the slave trade.

V

The ethnic element was not restricted to Arakan. From the mid-fifteenth to the early sixteenth century, northern mainland Southeast Asia became increasingly important geopolitically. Ethnicity was a recurring feature of developments in the region. These included the rise of the Maw Shan and their confrontation with Ming China around the 1430s–1440s; the expansion of Lan Na (Chiang Mai); the rise of the Shan states of Mong Mit and Mohnyin between the 1480s and 1527; Ava's shift from its Shan base towards a Burman model, along with the adoption of the chakravartin political ideal; and the expansion of the Manipur and Ahom states.

The foundation myth of the Tai Ahom in Assam identifies its founder as Sukhapa, who marched into Assam around 1228–29 and conquered Kamrup around 1231. There are clear links between the Ahom and the Möng Mao (Pong) polity of Lu-chuan. According to Möng Mao legend, Sukampha became king of Pong in 777, and his brother Samlongpha invaded Cachar, Tripura, Manipur and Assam. The similarity between the lists of Ahom rulers and those of the Tai Mao, whose rulers share similar names, cannot be coincidental.

Expansionary wars led to new political and ethnic configurations. Ming China's expansion destabilised the small Tai states in the Yunnan-Ava corridor. China now controlled the output of the Bawdin and Yadanatheingyi mines at Namtu, in and around Mogok, and the mines in Yunnan, which were traditional sources of silver, gold and tin for the region. When Ava reverted to Shan domination in the sixteenth century, the Shan dynamic became more significant for Arakan and Bengal. Yunnan's silver and tin entered the region via Ava and Kamrup, and also through Tripura and Sylhet via Manipur. Ahom campaigns against eastern hill tribes such as the Naga, Chutiya, Abor, Dafla and Miri at this time reveal the need to renegotiate relations with the Shan corridor. Manipur's wars against the Shan states can be understood as reflecting a desire to access vital trade routes, obtain Mogaung's abundant jade and Nogmung's amber and silver, and gain entry to Mohnyin's ruby mines, which formed the basis of Ava's wealth.

Notably, Arakan did not raid these polities. Ethnicity clashed with empire only in the southeast.



An engraving depicting Arakanese traders selling enslaved people to the Dutch East India Company at Pipli (present-day Odisha) in January 1663, published in the 1708 edition of Wouter Schouten's Travels into the East Indies. IMAGE: **RIJKSMUSEUM**

VI

The chronic shortage of manpower within Arakan was yet another reason it engaged in the slave trade. Enslaved people were both state-owned and privately held. Slave ownership became a mark of status in Arakanese society. In the second half of the seventeenth century, Arakan introduced a new variant of the trade whereby nobles directly claimed enslaved people as captured booty. Similarly, instead of imposing a poll tax on imported slaves, the king directly claimed a share of the captives. It seems that skilled workers and craftsmen were selected for resettlement. Enslaved people were also used to clear forests for cultivation as the state sought to reshape the agrarian landscape on commercial terms. Wet-rice cultivation, which greatly increased agricultural output, was undertaken by enslaved Bengalis.

Shihabuddin Talish observed that '[o]nly the Feringi pirates sold their prisoners. But the Maghs employed all their captives in agriculture and other kinds of service.' The document of June 1777 remarks: 'Upon their arrival there (at Arakan), they were conducted to the rajah, or sovereign, who chose from among them, for his slaves, all the handicraftsmen, and most useful persons; amounting to about one fourth of the whole number: the rest he returned to the captors; who conducted them by ropes about their necks, to a market; and there sold them for twenty, to seventy rupee, each; according to their strength abilities &ca. The purchasers assigned them the cultivation of their lands, and other laborious employments; giving each person for his monthly support, only fifteen seers of rice'.

VII

Arakan's extraordinary expansion had severe consequences not only in Bengal but also within Arakan itself. Raiding continued into the eighteenth century, but overstretched by its expansion, Arakan began to decline. It was conquered by Konbaung Burma in 1785, bringing an end to the Mrauk U dynasty, which had ruled the kingdom for almost 350 years. The raids had already ceased. However, as late as 1836, the American Baptist minister Reverend Howard Malcolm remarked on the persistence of slavery in Arakan. We do not know where the enslaved people came from. Perhaps they were descendants of the original captives from Bengal?

Rila Mukherjee *is a historian and the author of India in the Indian Ocean World: From the Earliest Times to 1800 (Springer Nature, 2022) and Europe in the World from 1350 to 1650 (Springer Nature, 2025).*

DHAKA MONDAY OCTOBER 12, 2026, ASHWIN 27, 1433 BS

SPORT



I'm not happy with the amount of points that we've had so far. I think it could have been different but for a couple of little things here and there, but the reality is the reality, we've got to accept it.

Manchester United coach **MICHAEL CARRICK**

Record ton, familiar result

STAR SPORTS DESK

Although the Bangladesh women's cricket team suffered a nine-wicket thrashing at the hands of hosts Australia in the second WODI in Brisbane yesterday, there was one major positive to take away from the game. Sobhana Mostary's record-breaking maiden century -- the third WODI hundred by a Bangladeshi batter away from home -- offered a rare reason for optimism amid the Tigresses' persistent batting struggles. Called up to the senior national side in 2018 at just 16, Mostary has long shown glimpses of promise in Bangladesh's batting line-up. Her magnificent 118 off 134 balls was more than a personal milestone; it rescued the visitors from a precarious eight for three and helped them post 220 for six. However, Georgia Voll's unbeaten 131 ensured Australia romped to the target in just 28.1 overs, sealing the three-match series with a 2-0 lead.

1st: Sobhana Mostary became the first Bangladesh batter to score a WODI century against Australia.

118: Mostary's 118 off 134 balls was the highest individual score by a Bangladesh batter in WODIs, surpassing Fargana Hoque's 107 against India in 2022. It was Mostary's first international century and made her only the third Bangladesh woman to score a WODI hundred, after Fargana (two) and Nigar Sultana Joty (one).

195: Mostary and Joty shared a 195-run fourth-wicket partnership, Bangladesh's highest for any wicket in WODIs.

220-6: Bangladesh's highest total against Australia in WODIs.



"I am very happy for her [Sobhana Mostary] because she is a wonderful player and has been very consistent, so I think she deserved it. It was really historic and definitely a great achievement for her and for the team as well."

NIGAR SULTANA JOTY, Bangladesh captain

"Awesome for the game of cricket. The century was pretty special. They showed really good intent today, got us thinking a bit more about our field changes, and it was awesome to see them post a total like that."

TAHLIA MCGRATH, Australia captain

"I'm so happy about my hundred because I batted against the world champion. "

SOBHANA MOSTARY, Bangladesh batter

WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS
One-off Test, Day 4

Afghanistan vs Bangladesh
Live from 12:00 pm

LaLiga
Levante vs Sevilla
Live from 1:00 am (Tuesday)

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 HD
Premier League
Coventry vs Newcastle
Live from 1:00 am (Tuesday)



TIGERS FIRMLY IN CONTROL

Bangladesh ended the third day of their one-off Test against Afghanistan in the driver's seat, reaching 223 for six at stumps and taking a lead of 329 runs at the Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

The Tigers seized the initiative early in the day through pacers Ebadot Hossain and Hasan Mahmud, with the latter stealing the spotlight by becoming the first Bangladeshi fast bowler to take a Test hattrick.

Hasan claimed his fourth Test five-wicket haul, while Ebadot took four wickets, making them the first Bangladesh fast-bowling pair to claim at least four wickets each in a Test innings. Their efforts helped the Tigers secure a sizeable 106-run first-innings lead.

Bangladesh's batters then extended that advantage, with skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mushfiqur Rahim playing key roles through knocks in the eighties. Their 159-run fourth-wicket partnership helped the Tigers recover from 53 for three.

Although neither Shanto (82 off 191 balls) nor Mushfiqur (81 off 148) could reach three figures, Bangladesh remained firmly in control at stumps, with Mehidy Hasan Miraz (0* off one ball) and Litton Das (5* off 13) at the crease.

Hasan's domination continues with immaculate length management

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Hasan Mahmud's Test career has hit a purple patch over the last few months, and a maiden Test hattrick is the icing on the cake as his skill set in the red-ball format continues to grow.

A Test hattrick showcases a bowler's tenacity in the game's hardest format, and Hasan became the first Bangladesh pacer to achieve the feat, running through the Afghanistan batting line-up on the third day of the one-off Test on a good batting surface on Sunday.

The second new ball did the trick for Hasan. In Abu Dhabi, where there is little moisture and searing heat adds to a pacer's burden, Hasan showed the same nous that he had displayed in Rawalpindi, Chennai, Darwin and county cricket with Kent.

Things are falling into place for the 26-year-old, much like the lengths he hit on Sunday morning in Abu Dhabi.

Hasan is showing an ability to do more damage in less time. Over the last two years, he has been Bangladesh's most prominent pacer, taking 30 Test wickets at a strike rate of 53.86. Over the last 12 months, his strike rate has improved to 43.25, with 16 wickets in five Tests. Even in Bangladesh's impressive pace battery, Hasan stands out.

"In the last one-and-a-half years, he has improved immensely. From the Pakistan series to India and then elsewhere, his confidence has soared," Tarek Aziz, one of the pace-bowling coaches who has been working with Hasan, told The Daily Star.

"The main aspect was how he upgraded his length, which has increased his wicket-taking ability with the new ball," Tarek noted.

"Given his confidence, he now knows anything is possible, especially after performing against India and Australia and his exploits in county cricket. He now knows from what lengths to move the ball to get wickets. Length management, knowing what length to bowl on what wickets, has vastly improved. The length with the new ball varies from wicket to wicket. For instance, on some wickets the ideal length is 5.5m, while on another it is 6m, and it can be very challenging. He really focused on these lengths and is now very confident," Tarek said.

Not an express fast bowler, Hasan often does not attract the same limelight as some of his peers. But his consistency has made him an all-condition seamer, capable of making things happen on docile tracks. Even in the absence of Nahid Rana, his rise is helping Bangladesh deliver with the ball. His improved wrist action and high-arm action have been key to his development.

"Hasan is a flicker," Tarek said, referring to the wrist snap that gives the pacer extra zip. "Most importantly, his wrist position is higher than before, which automatically helps him swing the ball more. Now, if he can work more with the old ball, he would be even better," Tarek added.

All three deliveries that completed Hasan's hattrick forced the Afghanistan batters to play, but movement and extra zip proved their undoing. Hasan finished with figures of five for 55, his fourth five-wicket haul, drawing him level with Shahadat Hossain.

His exploits on Sunday also made him the fastest Bangladesh pacer to reach 50 Test wickets, achieving the milestone in 17 Tests and surpassing Taskin Ahmed, who took 18 matches. For now, the sky is the limit for Hasan and his snappy action.



Erling Haaland scored as Manchester City beat 10-man Liverpool 3-0 at Anfield in their first game since being found guilty of more than 100 breaches of Premier League financial rules. Second-half goals from Haaland, Jeremy Doku and Rayan Cherki extended City's flawless league start to six matches under Enzo Maresca, after Ryan Gravenberch was sent off -- also in the second-half -- for two yellow cards. The victory restored City's three-point lead at the top, but their title prospects remain clouded by an appeal against the verdict. No punishment has been announced, though a severe points deduction or even expulsion from the top flight remains possible if City fail to overturn the decision. [Inset] The visitors arrived under police escort to a hostile Anfield reception, with Liverpool fans chanting "cheats" and "going down" as nearby merchandise stalls displayed flags and scarves mocking City's financial scandal.



PHOTOS: FACEBOOK

SHORT CORNER

Smith surpasses Root with record 221st Test catch

Australian vice-captain Steve Smith became the leading non-wicketkeeper catcher in Test cricket history with 221 catches, surpassing England's Joe Root, who previously held the record with 220. Smith achieved the milestone on the third day of the first Test against South Africa at Kingsmead in Durban on Sunday, producing two stunning catches that helped Australia put the Proteas' top order under pressure.

Mahedi follows six-for with ton in NCL

Five centuries lit up the second day of the second round of the National Cricket League (NCL) on Sunday, as batters dominated across the venues amid the continued impact of the Kookaburra ball and hot weather. Shak Mahedi was the standout performer, following up his six-wicket haul on the opening day with a commanding century (104) to put Khulna in a strong position against Rajshahi in Mirpur.

BCB investigates Nahid Rana's back pain

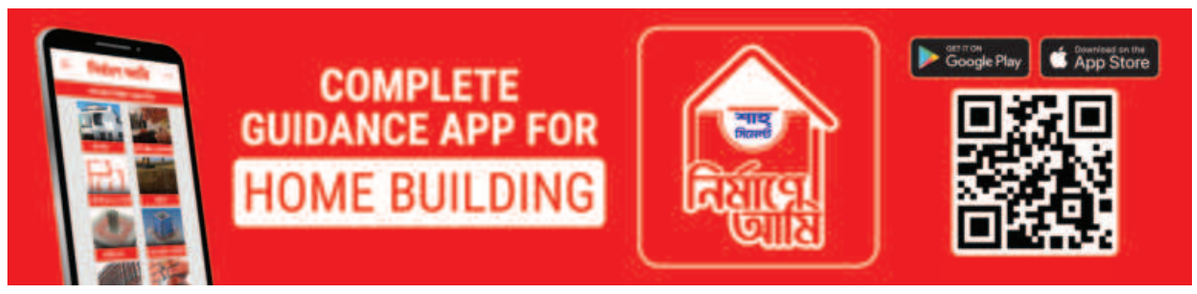
Doubts are growing over Bangladesh pacer Nahid Rana's participation in the upcoming West Indies Test series, although the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is yet to rule him out. The board has launched an investigation into the back pain he experienced during his recovery and is assessing the situation.

Bangladesh bow out of U-17 Women's Asian Cup qualifiers

Bangladesh finished their AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup qualifying campaign with a 3-0 defeat against the Philippines in Samarkand on Sunday, ending their hopes of reaching the final round of the continental competition. Bangladesh kept the Philippines at bay until late in the match but conceded goals in the 73rd, 90th and 91st minutes to suffer a heavy defeat.

*** Read full stories on The Daily Star's website*





Hasan 'let the ball do its job' on way to historic hattrick

SPORTS REPORTER

Hasan Mahmud took just one wicket on the opening day of Bangladesh's first Test against Afghanistan, but the pacer never felt the need to abandon his process. On the third day, bowling straight and trusting the ball to do its job earned him a maiden Test hattrick and a five-wicket haul as Bangladesh took control in Abu Dhabi.

"I took only one wicket the previous day, but I was not nervous at all. I was looking forward to the next day. I just felt I needed to bowl straight, hit the line of the stumps and let the ball do its job," Hasan said after the day's play.

The right-arm pacer's patience paid off spectacularly on Sunday morning. Afghanistan, resuming on 211 for four, lost their last six wickets for just 29 runs and were bowled out for 240 in 89.1 overs. Hasan finished with five for 55, while Ebadot Hossain claimed four for 56 as Bangladesh secured a first-innings lead of 106.

Hasan's hattrick came in the 83rd over, when he bowled Ismat Alam for one before Litton Das took a superb one-handed catch to dismiss Qais Ahmad for a duck. Zia-ur-Rehman then fell leg-before for another duck, with Bangladesh successfully

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Bangladesh batter Sobhana Mostary celebrates after reaching her maiden WODI century in the second match against hosts Australia in Brisbane yesterday. Mostary became the first Bangladeshi to score a ton against the current world champions, but her efforts went in vain as the Tigresses suffered a nine-wicket defeat to concede the three-match series 2-0.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SOBHANA MOSTARY'S FACEBOOK PAGE

IN FOCUS

Beware of 'coverts' and 'fascists' aligning

Tarique tells BNP MPs



PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL

BNP Parliamentary Party meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban last night.

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Prime Minister and BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman has instructed party leaders to strengthen the grassroots and stay united ahead of the upcoming local government elections, warning of a possible alignment between the "covert" and "fascist" forces.

Speaking at a three-hour BNP parliamentary party meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday evening, he also warned against extortion and land grabbing, stressed accountability, and urged vigilance during Durga Puja.

Several MPs said Tarique wanted election preparations to begin immediately, regardless of when the polls are held. Candidates should be selected locally based on grassroots support, organisational experience, and contributions to the party.

"No one will be picked from the centre for the local government elections. Qualified and acceptable candidates should be selected locally, and their names should be sent to the centre. The prime minister has instructed that there must be no disorder in this process," one MP said.

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Four placed on remand over defacing Tagore mural

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Rashtra Sanglap Forum President ANM Ayas on a three-day remand in a case filed over criminal conspiracy, inciting enmity between classes and religious hatred.

Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Jashita Islam passed the order after police produced him before the court with a 10-day remand prayer, said Additional Public Prosecutor Muhammad Shamsud Doha Sumon.

The court also placed Sakibul Hasan on a three-day remand and Sujon Mia and Marzia Khandaker Rimi on a two-day remand each in the case.

Earlier in the day, police filed the case against Ayas and his three associates with Shahbagh Police Station.

On Saturday, the four were detained over their alleged involvement in an attempt to deface a mural of Rabindranath Tagore on a wall opposite the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in Segunbagicha, Dhaka.

According to the police forwarding report submitted to the court, the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), as part of its ongoing drive to evict hawkers from pavements, cleared the footpath alongside the Public Works Department's boundary wall opposite the academy's gate. Subsequently, mural depicting Bangladesh's art, culture, and literature were painted on the wall.

"On October 9, Ayas announced that he would erase the mural on the boundary wall by whitewashing it," the report said.

"The next day, Ayas and the other

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INDIAN VOTER LIST ROW

Protests against polls chief continue

100 held from Connaught Place in Delhi; Dipke, two other CJP leaders released; internet services restored; metro stations reopen

AGENCIES

Police detained protesters in Delhi for the second day yesterday as sporadic protests broke out demanding India's election chief quit, and a court ordered the release of "cockroach" movement founder Abhijeet Dipke and two other senior leaders.

About 100 protesters, including CPI(M) leader John Brittas, were packed into two buses and taken away from the area, protesters said.

Dipke, Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka of Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) were detained when their plane landed in Delhi on Saturday, as the movement planned to gather thousands of people at Jantar Mantar in central Delhi.

The court yesterday ordered their release after they gave an undertaking to "maintain public peace for a year", the CJP said in an official statement. "Cockroaches never die," the group posted on its X account shortly after Dipke's release.

Activist and social media influencer Dhruv Rathee, who was also among those detained, was released at midnight on Saturday.

Youth protesters, many of them from students organisations affiliated with India's communist parties, launched sporadic protests around the city yesterday afternoon before police detained them and hauled them away in vehicles.

The All India Students' Association alleged in a post on X that those detained were assaulted by police inside the vehicles, reports Reuters.

Over 30,000 police and paramilitary personnel continued to be deployed across the city although metro stations reopened and mobile internet services were back up after the authorities locked down the city in an attempt to thwart Saturday's protests.

- Congress calls for mass mobilisation in Delhi today
- Delhi court asks released CJP trio to maintain peace for a year
- Over 30,000 police, paramilitary personnel deployed across capital

The Congress has asked all its Members of Parliament (MPs) to remain in Delhi today, as the opposition prepares for another round of protests, reports ANN.

With access to Jantar Mantar blocked on the first day Saturday, Neha Bora, emerged as a new face of the protests, urging people to regroup at Dilli Haat, a crafts market 10 km (6 miles) away.

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People travel along a road blocked by shipping containers amid ongoing protests by the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party demanding the release of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan in Peshawar, Pakistan, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

ANTI-GOVT PROTESTS BY PTI

Pakistan imposes emergency in KP

Head of provincial govt arrested; ex-PM Khan's party chairman calls move 'extremely alarming'

AFP, *Islamabad*

Pakistan placed a northern province under emergency rule yesterday, the president's office said, following anti-government demonstrations by supporters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and militant violence in the northwest.

Thousands of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supporters have been marching in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province to demand his release and airing anti-government criticism fuelled by harsh economic conditions.

The emergency move, invoked under two articles of Pakistan's constitution dealing with security, grants the federal government sweeping administrative powers over the province.

A provincial governor will take charge with an advisory council, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar told a news conference in Islamabad, adding that the arrangement will initially be in place for six months.

"This is more of a coup disguised as

"This is more of a coup disguised as emergency."

Zulfikar Bukhari, spokesperson for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf

emergency," said Zulfikar Bukhari, Khan's aide and his party's spokesperson, adding that it risks leading to further bloodshed and instability.

President Asif Ali Zardari signed the order after recommendations "regarding the law and order situation, and the failure of negotiations with government delegations", his office said. An image issued by Zardari's office showed his signature affirming the measures.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's office said earlier the decision had been taken over the "deteriorating law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and... from the provincial government's deliberate indifference in the

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