DHAKA SATURDAY OCTOBER 17, 2026



"Well, I think that's a disgrace. It should end soon...But I think I find Zelensky to be more difficult to deal with than Putin."
TRUMP on Ukraine's renewed strikes on Russian refineries

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The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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A year on, July charter remains mired in discord

BNP, opposition divided over reform mechanism

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR, MAMUNUR RASHID, SHAMIMA RITA

A year after political parties signed the July National Charter, disagreements over how to implement its reforms continue to strain the consensus that once united them.

Opposition parties accuse the ruling BNP of abandoning its pre-election commitments by replacing a referendum-backed reform process with one that would leave constitutional changes largely in the hands of the parliamentary majority.

When political leaders gathered at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban on October 17 last year, the charter was presented as a roadmap for turning the aspirations of the July uprising into lasting institutional reforms.

After months of negotiations, the parties agreed on 84 reform proposals, 48 of which require constitutional amendments. The proposals aimed to prevent a return to authoritarian rule and reshape state institutions.

But as the charter marks its first anniversary, that unity appears increasingly fragile. At the heart of the discord is how the constitutional reforms should be implemented.

The BNP says it will implement the charter as signed, but maintains that constitutional amendments must ultimately be enacted through parliament. The government has formed a special parliamentary committee to recommend the changes.

At the same time, it rejects the legal basis of the proposed Constitution Reform Council. On March 31, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed told parliament that the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order was "void ab initio", or invalid from the beginning.



"The unprecedented opportunity to establish an accountable system of governance and undertake state reform, created following the July mass uprising, has been held hostage by power politics and a vicious bureaucratic cycle."
Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB)

He argued that the president had the authority to issue such orders only between March 26, 1971 and April 7, 1973, and lost that power after the first parliament was formed in 1973. He also described the implementation order as "a document of endless deceit and national betrayal".

Opposition parties led by Jamaat-e-Islami, however, insist that the government comply with the order, which provided for a Constitution Reform Council.

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General AHM Hamidur Rahman Azad said voters had endorsed a specific process for implementing constitutional reforms through a referendum.

"The people approved constitutional reform through a Constitution Reform Council, but the BNP is now relying on its overwhelming parliamentary majority to amend the constitution," he said. "The BNP is moving against public opinion."

Azad warned that bypassing the agreed mechanism could invite legal challenges and jeopardise months of political negotiations.

Jamaat would continue its campaign both inside and outside parliament,

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Workers sort stacks of newly printed government textbooks at a printing press in the Bhanga Press area of Matuail in the capital yesterday. Printing presses are operating round the clock to complete textbooks for primary and secondary students ahead of distribution in January, when the new academic year begins.
PHOTO: **FIROZ AHMED**

How FB posts led to Satkhira mob killing

ABIR AYON *and* **TAREK HOSEN**

When Wahiduzzaman Shamim was accused of making derogatory remarks about Islam, Facebook became more than a platform for circulating the allegation. It became a place to identify the accused, mobilise people, incite violence, and, after his death, justify the killing.

An analysis by The Daily Star of 33 Facebook posts published between October 13 and 15 traces how an allegation of religious insult in Satkhira's Debhata escalated into calls for punishment, followed by celebrations, justifications, threats, and glorification of the perpetrators.

Shamim, however, is not the only victim of such violence. In October 2025, another young man was beaten by a mob over allegations of desecrating the Quran in the same upazila.

HOW SHAMIM WAS KILLED

According to Shamim's family, an audio recording of a conversation between him and his wife went viral

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

Middle East crisis threatens a lifeline for the poor

Flight disruptions, shrinking job prospects put migrant workers, families at risk

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Bangladesh's struggle with poverty is making overseas jobs more important for millions of families, but turmoil in the Middle East is putting that escape route at risk.

For families that have borrowed heavily to send a member abroad, a lost job or delayed flight can quickly turn years of sacrifice into fresh debt.

Mohammad Rezaul Karim, 30, knows the risk all too well. He spent two years repaying the Tk 4.5 lakh he borrowed to secure a job in Saudi Arabia and had only recently begun to feel financially secure.

Now stranded in Bangladesh after his October 11 flight was cancelled, he fears having to borrow another Tk 4 lakh to Tk 5 lakh if he cannot return before his visa expires on November 5.

"Now, if this gets cancelled, I will have to borrow money again and go through the whole process all over again," he told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

Rezaul, who works at a residential hotel in Dammam, has been asked to wait until October 18 but has yet to receive confirmation of a new flight.

Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh's largest overseas labour market, is at the centre of the latest disruption. Attacks by Houthis and security restrictions at Saudi airports have disrupted flights, raising uncertainty.

The sole earner for his family in Satkhira, he supports his parents, daughter and younger brother. He had to drop out of a diploma course in electrical engineering after completing his Secondary School Certificate because his family could not afford his education.

"If we were not poor, why would we want to work abroad?" he said.

The World Bank estimates that the country's poverty rate rose to 22.5 percent in 2026 from 18.7 percent in 2022, with around 21 lakh more people pushed into poverty in FY26. Another

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2



'Reporting cost him his life'

Says brother of slain journalist Alif

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrokona*

Sadequr Rahman Fakir, younger brother of journalist Lutfozzaman Fakir Alif, who was shot dead in Netrokona's Durgapur yesterday, alleged that his brother had faced previous attacks and threats.

"They [attackers] did not let my brother live. He was hacked before as well. A case was filed, but nothing came of it. Perhaps nothing will happen this time either. Please, at least stand by us. We want exemplary punishment for those responsible," he said

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Colourful lights illuminate the surroundings of Shankar Math Temple on College Road in Barishal city as Hindu devotees celebrate Durga Puja, their biggest religious festival. The dazzling decorations reflect on the water, creating a spectacular display. The photo was taken yesterday.
PHOTO: **TITU DAS**

We Remember

17th October 2005

21 years into your eternal journey you still remain in our hearts as you did when you left office the evening of 16th October 2005. Though we miss and feel your absence every working day the insurance Industry in Bangladesh shall continue to remember your life time service to promoting Insurance and an inspiration and mentor to the future generations to feel your presence through the Books and Articles that you have left behind to pursue this noble profession...

We pray to the Almighty to grant our founder and mentor Jannatul Firdaus. Ameen. **- The BGIC Family.**



M. A. Samad
(1923-2005)



বাংলাদেশ জেনারেল ইনসিওরেন্স কোম্পানী পিএলসি.
Bangladesh General Insurance Company PLC.
(The first Private & Public Non-Life Insurance Company of Bangladesh)

When Dhaka was small enough to just drop by

JANNATUL BUSHRA



AI-ASSISTED ILLUSTRATION

MY DHAKA

There was a time in Dhaka when weekends had one simple plan: "Cholo, beraite jai."

No calls, no WhatsApp, no traffic apps. You simply got on a rickshaw or a wheezing baby taxi and went.

Sometimes, you arrived carrying a box of sweets or a bag of fruits, as if visiting a relative required a modest offering to the household gods. Sometimes, you brought nothing at all. It did not matter. You went anyway.

You went to your nani's house, khala's house, fupu's house, some uncle's flat where the adults would sit and talk for hours, while you disappeared into bedrooms with your cousins. Someone would make tea. Someone would bring out biscuits. Someone would insist that you eat. Someone would inevitably comment on how much you had grown since the last visit, followed by a fairly aggressive assessment of your weight.

And then, just when you thought you had escaped the inspection, some uncle would look over his glasses and ask, almost casually, "What was your result in your last board exam?"

There it was.

The afternoon had started with tea and biscuits. But somehow ended with your academic audit.

Still, it was fun!

There were cousins on the floor, uncles occupying the best chairs, aunties discussing people who were not present, and one television quietly providing background noise until somebody remembered that BTV had something worth watching.

Someone would shout from the kitchen, "Has the show started?"

"Yes!"

And suddenly, the uncles had stopped discussing politics, and the cousins had been temporarily stripped of their right to make noise.

The house itself seemed to understand that people would come.

There was space for extra chairs. Space for extra plates. Space for children to make a nuisance of themselves. Nobody appeared particularly concerned about whether the sofa would survive.

Then the city grew.

The buildings went up. The drawing rooms became smaller, or perhaps our expectations became larger. Families became nuclear and relatives increasingly became people we loved from a respectable distance.

Everyone moved somewhere.

An uncle moved to Mirpur. Someone bought a flat in Bashundhara. Grandparents stopped living with everyone. Then somebody left for Canada, Australia, or America and suddenly, the family tree had branches in three time zones.

And Dhaka became very difficult to cross.

A visit that once meant a rickshaw ride now requires Google Maps, a ride-sharing app, traffic updates and what not!

"Come over this Friday" has become a proposal requiring negotiation.

Next week becomes next month. Next month becomes Eid. Eid becomes a phone call.

And that is perhaps how 'beraite jaowa' disappeared. Not dramatically, but through a thousand small inconveniences.

Now we know where everyone is, what they ate and occasionally what they are thinking. Sure, we are more connected than ever, technically.We just do not show up at each other's houses very much anymore.

I sometimes wonder whether children growing up in Dhaka today will understand the peculiar excitement of being told to get ready because you were going to your khala's house.

And perhaps the most remarkable thing about those afternoons was how utterly ordinary they were.

You went because it was Friday. You went because school was closed. You went because your mother felt like visiting her sister. You went because your grandmother lived there. You went because nobody needed a better reason.

Perhaps beraite jaowa did not disappear because we stopped loving our relatives. Perhaps Dhaka simply became too busy, too crowded, and too inconvenient to visit the people who live within it.

Which is a rather strange thing for a city to do: bring millions of people closer together, while making it harder to drop by!

Houthis target Saudi capital again

Missiles, drones intercepted; 5 killed in Yemeni presidential palace attack

AFP, *Riyadh*

The Saudi-led coalition fighting Yemen's Houthis yesterday said that it intercepted missiles and drones over Riyadh and other areas, as the kingdom comes under sustained attack from its Iran-backed foes.

Since Yemen's civil war flared back to life in July, the Houthis have repeatedly struck Saudi targets including Red Sea tankers, oil facilities and Riyadh's international airport, where 13 people were killed in a single attack last week.

Saudi Arabia leads a military coalition that has supported Yemen's internationally recognised government against the Houthis for more than a decade.

"We intercepted and destroyed three drones in the southern area and Riyadh... and two cruise missiles over the Red Sea," coalition spokesman Turki al-Malki wrote on X.

He added that "in the past hours, we intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile over Yanbu", a city home to the terminus of a major oil pipeline on the Red Sea coast.



Smoke billows from the presidential palace complex in Aden, Yemen on Thursday. PHOTO: REUTERS

The pressure on Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, comes as global energy markets were already rattled by Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz at the outset of the wider Middle East war in February.

The Houthi attacks have proliferated since the group launched a lightning offensive in Yemen in September, seizing strategic government-held territory along the Red Sea coast overlooking a major chokepoint for global shipping.

The UN Security Council on Thursday "condemned in the strongest terms continued and escalatory Houthi attacks against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia", as well as their "attacks and threats against commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb" Strait, the southern gateway to the Suez Canal.

Yemeni government forces have launched a counteroffensive with Saudi air support to retake areas seized by the Houthis, but have so far failed to reverse their gains.

On Thursday, the group launched a deadly missile attack on the presidential palace in the interim seat of the Yemeni government in Aden, killing five people and wounding 16 others, according to the health minister.

Yunus gets 'Hillary Rodham Clinton Award'

BSS, *Dhaka*



Former interim government chief adviser and Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus has received the "Hillary Rodham Clinton Award".

Former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton presented the award to Grameen Bank founder Yunus at a ceremony held at Georgetown University in Washington on Thursday.

Four people, including Yunus, received the honour this year. The other recipients are India's Self-Employed Women's Association Director Reema Nanavaty, Tory Burch Foundation founder and fashion designer Tory Burch, and board chair of Jordan's Microfund for Women Muna Sukhtian, who also received the special "Georgetown Ambassadors Award".

In his acceptance speech, Yunus said, "This is a recognition of 50 years of our work. The event you have organised here will convey an important message to Bangladesh and inspire Grameen families."

Dhaka still in the dark over Saudi executions

Awaits response to note verbale

TASNEEM TAYEB

Three days after Saudi Arabia executed two people it identified as Bangladeshi nationals, Bangladesh's consulate in Jeddah is still awaiting an official Saudi response in a bid to verify their identities and nationality.

An official of the Bangladesh Consulate General in Jeddah said it has yet to receive a formal response from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs to a note verbale seeking formal confirmation of the executions.

The Saudi Ministry of Interior identified the two as Nazerul Islam Abdul Basir and Siti Akhtar. The official said the mission was trying to verify the information.

The incident raises questions about consular notification under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, to which both countries are parties.

Article 37(a) requires the authorities of a receiving state, where relevant information is available, "to inform without delay the consular post in whose district the death occurred" when a foreign national dies.

Article 36(1)(b) requires authorities to inform detained foreign nationals without delay of their right to consular notification. If a detainee requests it, the authorities must notify the relevant consulate.

The convention does not explicitly require advance notification of an execution. The Bangladesh consulate said it had no prior knowledge of the executions.

Article 36(1)(c) also provides for consular access to detainees, communication with them and assistance in arranging legal representation.

It remains unclear whether either individual knew of these rights or requested consular assistance.

According to the Saudi Ministry of Interior, the two were arrested, investigated and charged before being referred to a competent court. The court found the charges proven and sentenced them to death under ta'zir, a form of discretionary punishment under Islamic law.

The ministry said the offence involved what it described as an immoral act inside a mosque in Makkah. The sentences were upheld by the relevant authority before a royal order was issued for their execution, according to the statement carried by the state-run Saudi Press Agency.

The Saudi statement did not say when the two were arrested or how long they remained in custody. It also gave no details about whether they had legal representation or whether their families were informed of the legal proceedings.

A year on, July charter remains mired in discord

FROM PAGE 1

he said. The Jamaat-led alliance has been holding demonstrations with an eight-point demand that includes implementation of the referendum result.

After the second meeting of the Special Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Amendment on September 20, Salahuddin reiterated that the government remained committed to implementing the July charter in full.

"We have said that we will implement the July National Charter word for word. We will bring the necessary constitutional amendments as quickly as possible in line with the charter that was signed by the political parties," he told reporters.

Rejecting allegations that the BNP was unwilling to implement the charter because of its parliamentary majority, he said such claims were intended to create confusion.

"Some political parties are spreading propaganda that the BNP does not want to implement the July National Charter because it holds a majority in parliament. This is completely untrue," he said.

HOW THE CHARTER TOOK SHAPE

The charter emerged from a political dialogue initiated by the National Consensus Commission, headed by then chief adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

Between March and October 2025, the commission held several rounds of discussions with political parties on reforms to the constitution, judiciary, public administration, elections and other state institutions.

Thirty parties took part in the process, and 24 signed the charter on October 17, 2025. Gano Forum joined later, followed by the National Citizen Party (NCP) after the February election, bringing the total number of signatories to 26.

On November 13, 2025, then president Mohammed Shahabuddin issued the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order. It provided for a referendum on 48 constitutional issues, to be held alongside the national election on February 12 this year.

Under the approved framework, elected MPs were to serve both as legislators and as members of a Constitution Reform Council, which would implement the charter's constitutional provisions within 180 working days.

POST-ELECTION HICCUP

After the election, BNP lawmakers declined to take the additional oath required to join the reform council, arguing that the constitution made no provision for such a body.

Opposition MPs from the Jamaat-led alliance took both oaths and insisted that the referendum result and the implementation order be respected.

The council has yet to be formed.

The government instead proposed a special parliamentary committee to oversee the constitutional reforms.

Jamaat, the NCP and their allies rejected the proposal, arguing that an ordinary parliamentary committee could not replace the council envisaged in the charter.

The government initially proposed a 17-member committee, with 12 members from the ruling alliance and five from the opposition. The Jamaat-led 11-party alliance, which includes eight charter signatories, rejected the proposal. The committee was nevertheless formed on July 13.

It has since consulted various stakeholders and is expected to submit its recommendations by December. The government aims to place a constitutional amendment bill before parliament in its January 2027 session.

At the committee's seventh meeting on October 13, Salahuddin reiterated that the government preferred consensus but would proceed with the amendments even if opposition parties declined to participate.

CONCERNS OVER REFORM ROLLBACK

The dispute extends beyond the council to the ordinances issued by the interim government.

The interim administration issued 133 ordinances covering judicial independence, anti-corruption measures, human rights and other institutional reforms.

The BNP government chose not to ratify 16 and repealed another seven, fuelling opposition concerns that parts of the reform agenda could be diluted or abandoned.

The affected measures included provisions on Supreme Court judge appointments, a Supreme Court Secretariat, enforced disappearances, the Anti-Corruption Commission, the National Human Rights Commission and the Police Commission.

Among the repealed measures were the Supreme Court Judges Appointment Ordinance and the Supreme Court Secretariat Ordinance, which had been introduced to strengthen judicial independence.

The government has said the relevant measures will be reintroduced as bills after further review and consultation.

It has moved ahead with legislation on some issues, including enforced disappearances, the National Human Rights Commission and security sector reforms. Opposition lawmakers, however, say several bills fall short of the original reform agenda.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday said the unprecedented opportunity to establish accountable governance and undertake state reforms after the July uprising had been held hostage by power politics and a "vicious bureaucratic cycle".

In a statement marking the charter's first anniversary, the anti-corruption watchdog urged all political parties to show the same goodwill and wisdom they had displayed in reaching consensus on the charter.

OPPOSITION PARTIES SCEPTICAL

For the NCP, the BNP's refusal to join the council marked a decisive break with the charter's implementation framework.

NCP Member Secretary Akhter Hossen said the referendum had given the reforms a direct public mandate.

"The BNP is effectively rejecting the referendum verdict because it disagrees with many of these fundamental reforms," he said.

He warned that the government could pursue only limited reforms while leaving broader democratic goals unfulfilled.

Islami Andolan Bangladesh has also questioned the government's commitment.

Its General Secretary, Gazi Ataur Rahman, alleged that the BNP had backed the referendum process before the election but began questioning its legality after taking office.

His party was waiting to see how the government proceeded, he said, warning that abandoning the charter could carry political costs.

"If the government backs away from the charter, it will face a difficult situation," he said.

Rastro Songskar Andolan President Hasnat Quaiyum said the charter recorded political parties' commitments to reform, while the referendum endorsed both the proposals and the mechanism for implementing them.

Recent developments had raised doubts about the BNP's commitment to the full agenda, he said. Disregarding the public verdict could undermine the democratic process and risk a return to highly centralised governance.

"This is creating a troubling precedent in Bangladesh's democratic politics. If the people's verdict is ignored, it could create a serious crisis for the country's democratic future. It would not only damage the BNP politically but also undermine Bangladesh's broader democratic culture and political process," he said.

Quaiyum nevertheless said he remained hopeful that the government would honour the mandate within the council's 180-working-day timeframe. Constitutional reform could not be avoided indefinitely, he said.

RULING ALLIANCE PARTNERS REMAIN HOPEFUL

Some parties that joined the BNP-led ruling alliance in the election remain optimistic about implementation, although they differ over the causes of the impasse.

Abul Hasan Rubel, executive coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolon, said the charter was a formally signed political document that should be implemented as agreed. Failure to do so could undermine the political unity built around it.

However, he attributed the deadlock partly to "flaws" in the interim administration's implementation framework.

"In my view, the referendum order should have been issued only after further discussions among the political parties based on the recommendations of the expert committee. But that did not happen," he said.

Revolutionary Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Haque said the BNP had made a political mistake by refusing to form the council for 180 days, despite campaigning in favour of the referendum-backed process.

Had the BNP followed that course, it could have countered accusations that it did not believe in the charter or the July uprising, he said.

"For now, I remain optimistic that the BNP will move forward with it in the coming months," he said.

Elon Musk unveils Tesla's 'flying' car

AFP, *Houston*



Tesla CEO Elon Musk unveiled what he described as a "flying" car, equipped with thrusters, during a livestreamed event at his SpaceX rocket company's facility on Thursday.

Technical and regulatory challenges have so far prevented the much-hyped flying car sector from getting off the ground. Musk revealed his new Roadster sports car during a launch event at a SpaceX test facility in Texas.

During the demo, which was livestreamed on Tesla's X account, the car launched from a steep ramp and landed on its wheels. "Flying cars are real," Musk said during the event. He added that the vehicle's "success is not guaranteed" but that "it will probably work."

Musk said the car was equipped with "ultra high-pressure air tanks" to propel itself into the air.

The tech billionaire described the development as "what happens when you have a collaboration with the world's best car company and the world's best rocket company," referring to Tesla and SpaceX.

The vehicle would go into production in 2028, he said.

American aviation pioneer Glenn Curtiss debuted the first flying car prototype in 1917.

But successful designs have become more seriously contemplated only in recent years as electric motors and high-performance batteries have advanced.



SM Ali's 33rd anniversary of death today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today marks the 33rd death anniversary of Syed Mohammad Ali, founder editor-publisher of The Daily Star and a luminary in journalism of Bangladesh.

In a career spanning 44 years, SM Ali made his way up from a cub reporter to becoming one of the country's most brilliant editors. He also led the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) as its chairman.

Educated in Kolkata, Dhaka and London, he was one of the few Asian journalists who stood out in regional journalism.

Ali was born in a well-known family in Sylhet, in

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



After a decade-long closure, the newly renovated Osmani Udyan in the capital is set to reopen to the public on October 19. The historic park and the newly built July Memorial will be inaugurated by the prime minister. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

IN FOCUS

Durga Puja begins with Maha Shasthi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Hindu community, began yesterday with Maha Shasthi amid tight security, with members of several forces deployed at mandaps across the country.

At Dhakeshwari National Temple in the capital, priests began the Shasthi rituals beneath the bel tree around 9:00am, to the beat of dhak and the sound of conch shells. Devotees then offered anjali to the goddess.

On the first day, devotees performed Bodhan, the ceremonial awakening and invocation of Goddess Durga, marking the formal commencement of the festivities.

Pujas are being held at 33,851 mandaps across the country this year, according to Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad.

Maha Saptami will be observed over two days, today and tomorrow, followed by Maha Ashtami on Monday and Maha Nabami on Tuesday. The festival will end with Bijoya Dashami and the immersion of idols on Wednesday.

According to sources, Border Guard Bangladesh will provide security at 2,727 mandaps from October 16 to 22, while the Coast Guard has deployed around 3,500 personnel at 615 temples and mandaps in coastal and riverine areas. In Dhaka, 2,072 additional police personnel will guard 257 mandaps, while more than 6,000 members of the SRB are on Durga Puja duty nationwide, with 2,457 deployed daily.

'They said it was a minor accident. My son was dead'

Says father of Sahriar Sayon, killed by school bus



PHOTO: COLLECTED

School ID card of eight-year-old Sahriar Sayon.

SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAM, *Narayanganj*

Like every other day, eight-year-old Sahriar Sayon was waiting beside his school bus after classes when another bus struck and ran him over, killing him on the spot.

The incident took place on Tuesday at Adamjee Cantonment Public School and College in the Jolshiri Abashon project in Narayanganj's Rupganj.

Sayon, the elder of two siblings, was buried at his ancestral home in Pabna the following morning.

His father, Md Sazu Ahmmed, who works at a private company in Dhaka, said the school authorities initially described the incident as a minor accident. The family lives in Khilkhet.

"The school called me around 3:45pm that day and told me my son had been in a 'minor' accident. I immediately rushed from my workplace in Dhanmondi. When I reached there around 4:30pm, I realised it was not a minor accident at all -- my son was dead," Sazu said.

CCTV footage suggested that the bus was being driven without its helper on board. It was making a turn when it struck Sayon.

Sazu blamed the helper's absence and mismanagement of the school bus service for his son's death.

"There should have been a ground attendant there. Children were moving around, and so many buses operate from that spot. If a helper or ground attendant had been present, the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

A fresh bid to streamline Dhaka's bus network

Owners pledge support for franchise plan; wage disputes, enforcement remain concerns

SHAMIMA RITA

After years of failed attempts, the government has again renewed efforts to introduce a bus route franchise system in Dhaka, with transport owners now pledging support.

However, enforcement and workers' wages remain unresolved.

At an October 8 meeting chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, authorities decided to launch services on two routes within seven working days, finalise franchises for 32 routes within two months and complete the rollout within six months.

Of Dhaka's 418 approved routes, only 98 operate, with around 7,500 buses belonging to 66 companies, according to the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA).

Overlapping routes and unfit vehicles contribute to congestion, competition for passengers, and crashes, it said.

To consolidate 98 routes into 32, the DTCA surveyed over 10,000 passengers' boarding patterns and more than 35,000 journeys' origins and destinations.

Officials say 70 percent of proposed routes correspond to existing ones, although some passengers will need to change buses.

Each route will have a designated operator, uniformly coloured buses, fixed stops, electronic and counter-based ticketing, and GPS tracking. Authorities propose 12-metre, 52-seat buses, with extra booking fees and unauthorised collections prohibited.

The five priority corridors are Beraid-Sadarghat (Route 21), Nandan Park-Demra (1), Kanchpur-Gazipur Chourasta (27), Konabari-Keraniganj (5) and Sreepur-Dhakeshwari Temple (4).

Authorities are also evaluating 25 circular routes connecting metro rail and eight routes for BRTC electric buses.

Contacted, DTCA Additional Executive Director Mohammad Mashiur Rahman said the 66 companies would form five operating groups, sharing route revenue based on the number of buses each operates. Owners would also help police prevent unauthorised operators from using assigned routes.

SM Khokon, additional secretary of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners' Association, said poor coordination among owners had stalled earlier efforts.

He also said owners have proposed paying drivers and helpers per completed trip, recorded at ticket counters, instead of by working hours.

The DTCA says operators will determine wage structures.

However, several drivers interviewed by The Daily Star opposed trip-based wages.

Rokon, a Projapoti driver on the Mohammadpur route, said congestion and competition from metro rail and battery-run rickshaws have reduced passenger numbers. "A trip-based wage system would make our earnings uncertain and make it harder for us to meet our regular living expenses."

Romjan Molla, a Dewan driver on the Mohakhali route, said he would accept the system if it met drivers' needs but insisted that owners reach an agreement with workers first.

The DTCA said a meeting between workers and owners will take place within the next few days.

Each route will have a designated operator, uniformly coloured buses, fixed stops, electronic and counter-based ticketing, and GPS tracking.



Last year, a government task force recommended fixed salaries instead of commission-based pay.

WHY PREVIOUS EFFORTS FAILED

Bus route reform first featured in the 2004 Strategic Transport Plan. Late Mayor Annisul Huq of DNCC revived the initiative in 2015, but it lost momentum after his death in 2017.

A Ghatarchar-Kanchpur pilot launched in December 2021 under then DSCC mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh failed to expand amid owners' resistance.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

All dev partners back Bangladesh

Says Amir Khosru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday said multilateral development partners are working closely with Bangladesh and have pledged support for the government's programmes.

He named the World Bank, the IMF and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as close partners. Meetings with other partners had been held the previous day.

"They [IMF] have now decided that a team from each side will sit in the next two to three weeks to work out the outstanding issues in greater detail. After that, the two sides will have to decide how to formally conclude the matter," Khosru said, speaking on the sidelines of the IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings in Bangkok as the week-long gathering closed.



He said the government and the IMF had agreed on the principles without difficulty.

Bangladesh had been under IMF's $4.7 billion loan programme since January 2023, signed by the then Awami League government. The amount was later increased to $5.5 billion by the interim government.

In May this year, the BNP-led government decided to exit the programme eight months before its expiry. The country received $3.8 billion in five tranches under the $4.7 billion loan programme.

The government later applied for a fresh loan package worth up to $5 billion and it has been in talks with the IMF.

Bangladesh also wants to sign a partnership agreement with the World Bank under its five-year development framework.

Why Tk 250cr July fund still unreleased?

July Shaheed Smriti Foundation asks govt at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The July Shaheed Smriti Foundation has questioned why the government is yet to release Tk 250 crore allocated for rehabilitating families of those killed and injured during the July uprising.

Lt Col (retd) Kamal Akbar, chief executive officer of the foundation, said it had rehabilitated 150 families with just 25 staff members.

He made the remarks at a roundtable titled "Strengthening National Solidarity with Soft Power: Designing a Way Towards the Dreams of July Heroes", organised by the foundation at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

Students, injured July fighters and family members of martyrs attended the event.

Kamal said the government had provided the foundation with Tk 58 crore, while it had distributed Tk 80 crore among beneficiaries. Meanwhile, its employees had gone without salaries for six months.

"Tk 250 crore has been allocated for the rehabilitation of the injured and families of the martyrs. The programme should have started by now. Why has it not been started yet?" he asked.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Karupannya's Green Field Factory wins RIBA award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Green Field Factory, a seven-storey textile facility in Rangpur, has won the prestigious RIBA International Prize, according to CNN.

Described by judges as a "work of quiet humility," the building features serene courtyards, walkways alongside ponds and a facade adorned with lush tropical plants.

Spanning more than 144,000 square feet, the factory was praised by the award's organiser, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), for bringing nature directly into the workplace. The factory is run by Karupannya Rangpur Limited, which produces handmade rugs and other textile products. The firm behind the project's design is Nakshabid Architects.

The factory provides workers with amenities including a rooftop daycare centre, an on-site medical facility and shaded areas for socialising. A large statue of a female figure stands at the entrance, symbolising the "strength of women's empowerment", according to the architects.



PHOTO TAKEN FROM KARUPANNYA RANGPUR LIMITED'S FACEBOOK PAGE.

A judging panel from RIBA visited the site in September. They said the project presented an "alternative model for factory design and operation."

It said Green Field Factory's design prioritised employee wellbeing and challenged ingrained social hierarchies. Jury chair Bijoy Jain highlighted the factory's expansive central entrance, used by workers, managers and owners alike, describing it as an "equanimous shared portal."

Nakshabid Architects' founder, Bayejid M Khondoker, said he had wanted to prove that "industry can breathe, nurture and inspire."

"A factory should not be a machine that consumes human energy. It should be a living place that restores it," he said.

Green Field Factory was one of two Bangladeshi projects shortlisted for the prize, alongside the BRAC University campus in Dhaka. The other two finalists, both in Belgium, were a renovated 1960s office building and an expanded art institute.

The RIBA prize is considered one of the most prestigious awards for a single building. Held every two years, it recognises projects that demonstrate "visionary, innovative thinking and design excellence."

Beef feast at JnU to protest slaughter ban

RAKIB MADBER

Leaders of the Jagannath University Central Students' Union (JnUCSU) and several other student organisations held a feast on campus yesterday, slaughtering a cow in what they described as a protest against a university directive banning animal slaughter on the premises.

The event came four days after a dispute over cooking beef khichuri near the university's central temple, which triggered criticisms by Hindu students.

Yesterday morning, students arranged slaughter of a cow on the road between the vice-chancellor's building and the mathematics department, and later distributed cooked beef and khichuri among students.

Organisers said they had set a registration fee of Tk 70 and met the cost of the cow through the fees and donations.

Acting Proctor Prof Md

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



MA Samad's 21st death anniv today

CITY DESK

Today is the 21st death anniversary of MA Samad, founder of Bangladesh General Insurance Company PLC (BGIC), said a press release.

After his retirement as managing director of Jiban Bima Corporation, he established BGIC, the first non-life insurance company in private sector after the country's liberation.

Moreover, he was the founder director of Bangladesh Insurance Academy and former chairman of Bangladesh Insurance Association.

MA Samad wrote two books in Bangla -- one on life insurance and another on general insurance. He also wrote two text books in English on life insurance.

He was an enlisted international expert in the Technical Assistance Program on Trade and Development of the UN. MA Samad visited most of the insurance training institutions in UK and USA under UNDP fellowship programme. MA Samad was born at Kulaura of Moulvibazar on January 1, 1923.

PRAYER TIMING

OCTOBER 17

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	4-50	12-45	4-00	5-38	7-15
JAMAAT	5-25	1-15	4-15	5-41	7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Amid fertiliser shortages, high pesticide prices and water scarcity, farmer Alatun Tudu irrigates his Aman paddy field with groundwater in Tema village of Mohanpur upazila, Rajshahi, as the crop nears harvest. The photo was taken yesterday.

Jubo Dal leader hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Cumilla*

Miscreants hacked a local Jubo Dal leader to death near Chhatarkhil police outpost in Cumilla Sadar upazila yesterday.

Md Abu Kawsar, 40, was a leader of Ward 4 of Cumilla city Jubo Dal, said Khalilur Rahman Biplob, senior joint convener of Cumilla Metropolitan Jubo Dal, said police.

He was from Cumilla city's Kaptanbazar, he added.

Touhidul Anwar, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Model Police Station, said Kawsar was attacked and seriously injured by a group of assailants in the Chhatarkhil area around 11:00am. He was taken to Cumilla Trauma Centre for treatment and died in the ICU around 2:00pm.

Witnesses said Kawsar was travelling in an auto-rickshaw through the Chhatarkhil area when assailants lying in wait launched a sudden attack on him. They repeatedly hacked him with sharp weapons, including on his neck, leaving him critically injured. The attackers fled on motorcycles after the assault.

Local sources said a dispute had been ongoing between some of Kawsar's friends and two local men over a piece of land.

Police were working to arrest those involved in the killing, said the OC.

Crowd detains RU student after car crash kills rickshaw-puller

RU CORRESPONDENT

A rickshaw-puller was killed and two others were seriously injured after a car, allegedly driven by a Rajshahi University student, hit them in the city's Talaimari area yesterday.

Dr Shamim Hasan, spokesperson for Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, identified the deceased as Md Shahjalali, 50.

"Three people were brought to our hospital for treatment. One of them died, while the other two are receiving treatment," he said.

Police and Rajshahi University campus sources identified the driver as SM Rizon, a student of the university's Department of International Relations and proprietor of Bengal Signature, a seal-making firm.

According to locals, the incident occurred around 2:00pm. Rizon was driving the car when it struck a female pedestrian, throwing her to the roadside. He then allegedly lost control of the vehicle and ran over two rickshaw-pullers, one of whom died at the scene.

People at the scene later detained Rizon and the car until police arrived.

Boalia Police Station Officer-in-Charge Masuma Mustari confirmed that an RU student named SM Rizon was in the driver's seat.

Gaziur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner (media) of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, said Rizon was taken to the police station along with the vehicle to maintain order as a crowd gathered at the scene.

"Further legal action will be taken if the allegations against him are substantiated during questioning," he added.

Beef feast at JnU to protest slaughter ban

FROM PAGE 3

Azam Khan told The Daily Star the administration had verbally withdrawn the restriction and permitted the programme on condition that the slaughter be conducted hygienically under university supervision.

He said university officials and police monitored the event, and no untoward incident occurred.

Abdul Alim Arif, general secretary of JnUCSU and president of the JnU unit of Islami Chhatra Shibir, the pro-Jamaat-e-Islami student organisation, said the feast was held in protest against "an unreasonable administrative decision".

He claimed almost all student organisations on campus had participated.

Organisers said they considered the restriction an unreasonable curb on students' food choices and cultural practices.

The controversy began on Monday night, when students of the 2021-22 academic session of the Islamic history and culture department arranged to cook beef khichuri near the university's open-air stage to celebrate completing their undergraduate studies.

Several Hindu students objected, saying the site was too close to the central temple. It was also alleged that bricks from the temple had been used to build the cooking stove.

Joy Saha, member secretary of the temple management committee, and several students went to the site to raise objections. The cooking arrangements were then moved away from the temple after the proctor intervened.

Organisers later said they had initially planned to cook at the university cafeteria but opted for a wood-fired stove because of low gas pressure. They said they set aside the bricks after learning they belonged to the temple, brought an iron stove from the cafeteria, and expressed regret over what they called an unintended mistake.

Joy said the objection was not limited to the bricks, adding that cooking beef so close to the temple was also a concern.

On Wednesday, the proctor's office issued a notice asking students to refrain from slaughtering animals on campus. It also warned of action under a public notice issued by Dhaka South City Corporation.

The directive drew criticism from a section of students. On Wednesday night, JnUCSU leaders and students staged a procession and rally, placing four demands: withdrawal of the notice, a public apology from the administration, an investigation into the incident, availability of beef and mutton at the cafeteria, and measures to ensure religious harmony. During the procession, they announced plans to slaughter a cow and hold a feast yesterday.

On Thursday, the university registrar called a meeting with JnUCSU leaders, journalists, and other stakeholders to discuss the overall campus situation, according to a statement from the registrar's office.

The statement said the administration regretted what it called a "misunderstanding", and that students could organise events involving animal slaughter as long as these did not disrupt other activities.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Joy Saha thanked the administration for ensuring that no cattle were slaughtered and no beef was cooked near the central temple.

"Our main demand was to protect the sanctity of the temple and prevent any actions that could hurt our religious sentiments. We believe in communal harmony, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence among people of all faiths," he said.

Meanwhile, the JnU unit of Khelafat Chhatra Majlis, a pro-Khelafat Majlis student group, has announced a similar feast and Qawwali programme today and bought a cow for it.

Prof Azam told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon that the administration had yet to give permission for the programme.

He said Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Rais Uddin had urged all students to refrain from slaughtering cows on campus during the ongoing Durga Puja.

They said it was a minor accident. My son was dead

FROM PAGE 3

driver might have realised that someone was near the bus. Call it negligence, carelessness or mismanagement -- there was a failure," he said.

Lt Col (retd) Ferdous Hasan, principal of the institution, said the helper was outside the campus gate at the time.

Meanwhile, a written undertaking submitted by Sazu to the school surfaced on Facebook on Wednesday. It stated that he would not pursue legal action over his son's death and did not personally hold anyone responsible.

However, the final line requested the school authorities to investigate the incident, identify those responsible and take action.

Sazu said he declined an autopsy to avoid a lengthy legal process and further distress to his family. His wife is expecting, he added.

"My child has died, and we could not bear the stress of a lengthy legal process on top of that," he said.

"I was told that I needed to submit a written undertaking. When the school prepared the document, it mentioned only a 'bus accident'. I asked them to change it to 'school bus accident'."

Sazu said he added the final line himself to make clear that, although he would not file a criminal case, he wanted the school to investigate and hold anyone found responsible accountable.

"I told them to form an inquiry committee, examine CCTV footages, identify anyone at fault and take disciplinary action. They must also improve school bus management so that no other child suffers such a tragic death," he said.

He also submitted a written statement to police seeking to receive the body without an autopsy.

"My child's head was completely crushed. His face was in no condition to be seen. I could not let his mother or anyone else see his face. We took him home only to bury him," Sazu said.

Principal Ferdous said the school buses were hired on contract and the incident was being investigated.

"This is an extremely tragic incident for us as well. We are investigating the matter seriously. The inquiry will examine what went wrong and why the incident occurred, and we will take further action based on the findings," he said.

He said the driver or anyone else found negligent would be dismissed, with further legal action possible if recommended.

AHM Salauddin, officer-in-charge of Rupganj Police Station, said no case had been filed.

"The family did not want a post-mortem and said they would not pursue legal action. If they seek police assistance, we will provide it," he said.

A fresh bid to streamline Dhaka's bus network

FROM PAGE 3

The interim government attempted a limited Gabtoli-Chashara rollout in 2025.

SM Salehuddin, former member of the DTCA Bus Route Rationalisation Coordination Committee, said owners and workers feared the system would reduce their income and control over bus operations and fares.

DTCA inspections in 2024 found that 165 of 400 designated stops across eight routes had not been built, while only 80 had fully functioning ticket facilities.

Under the latest decision, the DTCA and police must send improvement lists to city corporations within seven working days. Construction and repairs are due within three months, while owners have two months to repair and repaint rundown buses.

It remains unclear how existing valid permit holders will be excluded under the new system.

Bangladesh Passenger Welfare Association Secretary General Mozammel Haque Chowdhury demanded oversight by an experienced public authority and urged authorities to resolve problems on one or two routes before expansion.

Prof Shamsul Hoque of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology called for long-term funding, permanent supervision and coordination with BRTC, human hauliers, and smaller public transport services to prevent unequal competition.

"Maintaining discipline after the buses are launched will be the real challenge," he said. "Political will alone cannot guarantee success."

Why Tk 250cr July fund still unreleased?

FROM PAGE 3

Samsi Ara Zaman, mother of July martyr and journalist Tahir Zaman Priyo, said many of the injured were struggling financially.

"We must work to rehabilitate them and help the martyrs' families overcome their trauma. The government must make arrangements to disburse the fund," she said.

She urged people to support the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation.

Photographer and rights activist Shahidul Alam said people's sacrifice deserved recognition and must not be overlooked in documenting the uprising's history.

He called for an archive that would preserve the history without being politically influenced.

Dilara Chowdhury, political scientist and former professor at Jahangirnagar University, said more initiatives were needed to preserve the uprising's memory rehabilitate the martyrs' families and those injured.

Jaber bin Noor, an injured in the uprising, called for clarification of the death toll. "We need to find out why the figure of 843 people recorded during the interim government's tenure has not increased since then," he added.

SM Ali's 33rd anniversary

FROM PAGE 3

1928. He was the eldest son of the late Syed Mustafa Ali, an official of the Assam Civil Service, and nephew of famous litterateur Syed Mujtaba Ali.

Ali started off as a reporter with the Pakistan Observer while he was a student at Dhaka University. He went on to hold important positions in various publications in Pakistan, Hong Kong, Thailand and Singapore. He was the managing director of The Hong Kong Standard and The Bangkok Post.

He joined the Press Foundation of Asia as its executive director in the 1970s. In the mid-1980s, he became Unesco's regional communications adviser for Asia and the Pacific based in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur.

Ali returned home in 1989 and had a brief stint with the Bangladesh Observer as editor. He launched The Daily Star in 1991 and worked tirelessly to establish it as a leading national daily. He injected a new life in the English language journalism of the period. He died in 1993 at a Bangkok hospital at the age of 65.

বাংলাদেশ পেট্রোলিয়াম এক্সপ্লোরেশন এন্ড প্রোডাকশন কোম্পানী লিমিটেড (বাপেক্স)
BANGLADESH PETROLEUM EXPLORATION & PRODUCTION CO. LTD (BAPEX)
Administration Division, Foreign Purchase Department
BAPEX Bhaban (Level-4), 4, Kawran Bazar C/A, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh

Invitation for International Competitive Tender (ICT)

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources/ Energy & Mineral Resources Division
2	Agency	Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Corporation (Petrobangla)
3	Company	Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration & Production Company Limited (BAPEX)
4	Procuring Entity Name	General Manager, Administration Division, BAPEX.
5	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka.
6	Invitation for	Procurement of 3D Seismic Data Interpretation System (LOT-01: G&G Interpretation, Modeling & Log Interpretation Systems with related Services and LOT-02: Seismic Reservoir Characterization System with related Services)
7	Invitation Ref No & Date	BAPEX/Admin/Int/Ten-1358/2026
8	Date	Date: 14-10-2026
KEY INFORMATION		
9	Procurement Method	One Stage Two Envelopes Tendering Method (OSTETM)
FUNDING INFORMATION		
10	Budget and Source of Funds	BAPEX Own Fund
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
11	Project / Program Name	3D Seismic Survey at Habiganj, Bakhrabad & Meghna Fields
12	Tender Package No.	GD-12
13	Tender Package Name	Procurement of 3D Seismic Data Interpretation System (LOT-01: G&G Interpretation, Modeling & Log Interpretation Systems with related Services and LOT-02: Seismic Reservoir Characterization System with related Services)
		Date
14	Tender Publication Date	18-10-2026
15	Tender Last Selling Date	30-11-2026 at 15.00 hrs.
		Date / **Time**
16	Tender Closing Date and Time	01-12-2026 / 11.30 (BST)
17	Tender Opening Date and Time	01-12-2026 / 12.00 (BST)
18	Name & Address of the office(s)	**Address**
	- Selling Tender Document (Principal)	Accounts & Finance Division, BAPEX Bhaban (Level-3), 4 Kawran Bazar C/A, Dhaka-1215.
	- Selling Tender Document (Others)	i. Petrobangla; Accounts Division, Petrocenter, 3, Kawran Bazar C/A, Dhaka ii. Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd (TGTDCL); Accounts Division, 105 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Kawran Bazar C/A, Dhaka-1215.
	NO CONDITIONS APPLY FOR SALE, PURCHASE OR DISTRIBUTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS	
19	- Receiving Tender Document	Room No-401, Foreign Purchase Department, Level-4, BAPEX Bhaban, 4, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215.
	- Opening Tender Document	Room No-401, Foreign Purchase Department, Level-4, BAPEX Bhaban, 4, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215.
	Place / Date / Time of Pre-Tender Meeting	Meeting Room, Level-6, BAPEX Bhaban, 4 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215. / **Date**: 04-11-2026 / **Time**: 11:00 hrs. BST

INFORMATION FOR TENDERER

20	**Brief Eligibility and Qualification of Tenderer**	• The minimum of years of general experience of the Tenderer in the supply of Goods and related services as Supplier shall be 7 (Seven) years. • For LoT-1 The minimum specific experience as Supplier in supply of similar Goods of at least 1 (one) contract(s) successfully completed within the last 5 (Five) years, each with a value of at least 0.7 million USD or 8,61,00,000.00 BDT and For LoT-2 The minimum specific experience as Supplier in supply of similar Goods of at least 1 (One) contract(s) successfully completed within the last 5 (Five) years, each with a value of at least 0.22 million USD or 2,70,60,000.00 BDT. • Lot-01: The minimum supply experience for Lot-01 is 2 licenses of G&G Interpretation, Modeling & Log Interpretation software per year and for Lot-02: The minimum supply experience for Lot-02 is 2 licenses of Seismic Reservoir Characterization software per year. • The minimum amount of financial resources as liquid asset or working capital or credit line(s) or specific credit commitment or in any combination of them, of the Tenderers shall be is 0.80 million USD or 9,84,00,000.00 BDT for LOT-1 and 0.25 million USD or 3,07,50,000.00 BDT for LOT-2. • The Tenderer or Supplier from the Countries which do not have diplomatic relationship with Bangladesh are not eligible.
21	Brief Description of Goods	LOT-01: G&G Interpretation, Modeling & Log Interpretation Systems with Necessary Hardware; and LOT-02: Seismic Reservoir Characterization System with Necessary Hardware.
22	Brief Description of Related Services	• **Commissioning & Installation:** The bidder should provide service on Commissioning & Installation of the Software & Hardware at BAPEX Dhaka Office. • **Work association:** 142 days for LOT-01 and 58 Days for LOT-02
23	Language of Tender	Tenders shall be written in the English language.
24	Price of Tender Document (the currency (ies))	BDT 13,800.00 or USD 112.00 (Non-refundable) Including VAT

25	Lot No	Identification of Lot	Location	Tender Security Amount (the currency(ies)) Proposal to be made as per Tender Document ITT Clause-32	Completion Time/Delivery Time in Days
	1	Procurement of 3D Seismic Data Interpretation System (LOT-01: G&G Interpretation, Modeling & Log Interpretation Systems with related Services and LOT-02: Seismic Reservoir Characterization System with related Services)	The Goods are to be delivered at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka and related services are to be delivered as per Section 6: Schedule of Requirements of tender document.	BDT 33,00,000.00 (Thirty-Three Lac) or USD 26,830.00 (Twenty-Six Thousand Eight Hundred Thirty) for Lot-01 and BDT 85,000.00 (Eighty Five Thousand) or USD 690.00 (Six Hundred Ninety) for Lot-02	13 (Thirteen) weeks following the date of receipt of the L/C

26	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Md. Asad Ullah
27	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	General Manager (Admin)
28	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Room No-501, Administration Division, Level-5, BAPEX Bhaban, 4 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215.
29	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	+8802-55011774 gmadmin@bapex.com.bd/purchase.bapex@gmail.com/purchase@bapex.com.bd
30	The Tender will be conducted as per the PPA-2006 & PPR-2025. This Tender Notice will also be available at website of Petrobangla (www.petrobangla.org.bd), BAPEX (www.BAPEX.com.bd), DG Market (www.dgmarket.com) and BPPA (www.bppa.gov.bd).	
31	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings.	

GD-2521

General Manager (Admin.)

Gaza malnutrition gains fragile as supplies halt: UN

Israel cites tax dispute between local merchants and Hamas

REUTERS, *Geneva*

Gains in tackling malnutrition in Gaza remain fragile and could be undermined by disruptions to supplies entering the Palestinian enclave, the UN children's agency Unicef said yesterday, urging that all crossings remain open.

Israel said on Wednesday commercial goods were no longer entering Gaza because of what it described as a dispute over taxes between local merchants and Hamas.

That has cut off a vital source of food and other goods in a territory where most depend on humanitarian assistance after three years of war, repeated displacement and stringent Israeli restrictions on aid deliveries.

Although the ceasefire has improved aid access and reduced large-scale fighting, humanitarian agencies say ongoing strikes, continued displacement and widespread destruction have left civilians highly vulnerable.

Speaking to reporters in Geneva, Unicef spokesperson Ricardo Pires said the flow of both commercial and humanitarian supplies must remain predictable and continuous.

"The impact on children obviously will be felt if this situation is not resolved," he said. "We can't go back to a situation where children and families are not getting all the supplies, goods, and services that they require."

A new Unicef report published yesterday found that while the ceasefire since October has allowed more humanitarian aid and commercial supplies to enter, acute malnutrition remains a risk. The report said progress in pushing back the threat of famine, confirmed by a global food security monitor in August last year, had been achieved through a scaled-up food and nutrition response, the easing of restrictions on the entry of food and nutrition supplies, and the ceasefire.



Firefighters douse a burnt car with water after Israeli settlers attacked Palestinians harvesting olives near Turmus Ayya in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday. About 80 settlers, some carrying gas canisters, descended from a hill overlooking a terraced olive grove where villagers from Abu Falah had gathered to pick ripe olives, a cherished annual tradition in Palestinian life, witnesses said. PHOTO: **REUTERS**

Russia's stance a 'parody' of peace negotiations

Zelensky blasts Trump's diesel deal as EU leaders rally around him at Brussels summit; report says Kyiv running out of interceptor missiles

REUTERS, *Brussels*

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday took aim at US President Donald Trump's diesel deal with Russia and welcomed the prospect of European allies stepping up their role in talks, calling Moscow's stance a "parody" of peace negotiations.

At a European Union summit in Brussels, Zelensky said Russia did not want peace. He added that Ukraine was still experiencing disruptions to the SpaceX Starshield satellite system used for battlefield operations and to down Russian drones attacking cities far from the frontline.

EU leaders rallied around Zelensky after Trump again criticised Ukraine, calling its strikes on Russian refineries a "disgrace". On arriving at the summit, Zelensky pointedly referred to his counterparts there as "real leaders".

The EU is hosting Zelensky at one of the most difficult moments for Ukraine, with missiles and drones raining down on Ukrainian cities and fears that the US could pull back intelligence sharing and weapons support from Kyiv.

On the eve of Zelensky's appearance at the summit, Russia also moved to place local assets of French, German, Swedish and Dutch companies under temporary management, in retaliation for the EU's support for Ukraine, reports Reuters.



Russian drones kill **3** in Kharkiv, cut power to hundreds of thousands

Ukrainian attacks kill two in Russian-held Luhansk region

Russia moves on local assets of more European firms

Meanwhile, two civilians were killed as a result of Ukrainian attacks on the Russian-controlled Luhansk region in eastern Ukraine in the past 24 hours, the region's Russian-installed governor Leonid Pasechnik said yesterday.

Russian drones killed at least three people across Ukraine early yesterday, hit two shopping centres and knocked out power to around 370,000 in the northwest after strikes on the energy grid, officials said.

Ukraine has run out of missiles for the US-made Patriot air defense system, leaving it more vulnerable to Russian ballistic missile attacks, a source familiar with the situation told CNN on Thursday. The source told CNN that "almost all the ballistic missiles from the last strike were not intercepted due to lack of the (interceptor) missiles."

SCAM HUBS, RARE EARTHS

US holds more secret talks with Myanmar rulers: sources

REUTERS, *Washington*

The US and Myanmar's military-backed government held talks in Tokyo last week, people familiar with the matter said, their second meeting in a month as Washington steps up re-engagement with the generals it shunned after their 2021 coup.

Earlier talks in Myanmar's capital Naypyitaw in mid-September focused on securing the release of an American businessman and shutting down scam centers that target Americans, but could pave the way for broader discussions, including on Myanmar's rare-earth mineral deposits, Reuters previously reported.

It was not immediately clear exactly what the two sides discussed at last week's talks, disclosed to Reuters by three people with knowledge of the engagement. The people, including one US official, all requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the meeting.

US Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research Michael Vance again led the Tokyo talks, which involved more than a dozen US officials, one of the people said. Reuters could not establish who represented Myanmar.

The State Department did not respond to a request for comment on the latest talks, but says it engages with all □groups in Myanmar on issues affecting US interests. A spokesperson for Myanmar's military-backed government did not respond to a request for comment.

Asked about its role in hosting the talks, Japan's Foreign Ministry said in an emailed statement it had been "communicating as necessary" with both sides but declined to comment on specific diplomatic exchanges.

Last month's meeting in Naypyitaw between Vance and Myanmar's coup leader-turned-president, Min Aung Hlaing, provided an opening for broader discussions, people familiar with those talks previously told Reuters. The quick return to the negotiating table in Tokyo suggests both sides are keen to keep the dialogue going.

A major focus of the US push is securing Myanmar's help in shutting down scam hubs that run romance and other frauds and have swindled Americans out of billions of dollars, the people said.

Researchers say many scam operations are based in areas controlled by army-backed militia, with some proceeds flowing to the military, raising doubts about whether Myanmar's leaders are serious about enforcement.

12 people die as migrant boat sinks off Gambia

AFP, *Banjul*

Rescuers have recovered 12 bodies after a boat transporting migrants sank off the coast of Gambia, with an unknown number still missing, the Red Cross said.

The boat had set sail from the village of Jinack Kajata, which sits on an Atlantic island that residents say has become a frequent departure point for migrants trying to reach Spain's Canary Islands.

The long journey from west Africa is extremely dangerous due to strong currents and the often ramshackle, overloaded vessels used.

"The number of missing remains unclear. Further information is expected as rescue operations continue," the Gambia Red Cross Society said Thursday.

The latest incident follows another deadly sinking off Jinack Kajata in December 2025. The recent implementation of tighter patrols off Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal has forced migrants farther south in their attempts to reach Europe -- lengthening the dangerous journey.

IN BRIEF



Three children, teacher killed in Oregon shooting

AFP, *Los Angeles*

Three children and one teacher were shot dead at an elementary school Thursday in the northwestern US state of Oregon, police said, adding that the assailant was a 16-year-old who was killed by an armed bystander.

Another child and a teacher were being treated for critical injuries after the shooting at Silver Rail Elementary school in Bend.

Mike Krantz, police chief of Bend, told journalists that the department first learned of an active shooter after a call from a person who reported being shot at multiple times by a person carrying a long gun.

Dozens of emergency calls then reported that a shooter had entered the school and all law enforcement in the area were called to the scene, Krantz said.

Stop subsidising production of fossil fuels

UN chief urges govts

AFP, *Paris*

UN chief Antonio Guterres yesterday urged governments to stop subsidising the production of fossil fuels that are "boiling our planet and are the scourge of biodiversity".

"Subsidising fossil fuels is subsidising suicide. They are boiling our planet and are the scourge of biodiversity."

Addressing leaders in Armenia ahead of next week's UN biodiversity summit, Guterres said governments were still "spending money on the wrong things" and singled out incentives for fossil fuels.

"Subsidising fossil fuels is subsidising suicide," Guterres said at an event in Yerevan.

"They are boiling our planet and are the scourge of biodiversity. I urge governments everywhere to end these handouts once and for all, and to use the savings for people and planet instead."

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Project Director
Jamuna Rail Bridge Project
Bangladesh Railway, Railbhaban, Dhaka.

No. 54.01.0000.630.07.398.26-10113 Date: 15 October 2026.

Corrigendum-02 to Invitation for Bid (IFB)

The following corrigendum to invittation for Bid (IFB) against Reference No. 54.01.0000.630.07.398.26-9982 dated 13.08.2026 for Package No. WD5: Construction of Internal Roads, Drains and Related Works near Soydabad Station Area under Jamuna Rail Bridge Project' is hereby issued as under:

Sl No.	Ref. No.	As in IFB	As per Corrigendum Notice
1.	SI. 5	The Bidding Document may be purchased by interested Bidders on the submission of a written application to the address above during office hours until 4:00 PM, 04 October 2026 and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of BDT 20,000 (Bangladeshi Taka Twenty Thousand only) by cash	The Bidding Document may be purchased by interested Bidders on the submission of a written application to the address above dunng office hours until 4:00 PM, 26 October 2026 and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of BDT 20,000 (Bangladeshi Taka Twenty Thousand only) by cash
2.	SI. 6	Bids must be delivered to the address above on or before 11:00 AM local time on 05 October 2026 and must be accompanied by a Bid Security of BDT 4,000,000 (Bangladeshi Taka Four Million only) in favor of FA&CAO (Project), Bangladesh Railway, Kamalapur, Dhaka.	Bids must be delivered to the address above on or before 11:00 AM local time on 27 October 2026 and must be accompanied by a Bid Security of BDT 4,000,000 (Bangladeshi Taka Four Million only) in favor of FA&CAO (Project), Bangladesh Railway, Kamalapur, Dhaka.

Other terms and conditions of the IFB will remain unchanged. The above corrigendum shall be part and parcel of the Bid Document.

15/10/26
(Al Fattah Md. Masudur Rahaman)
Project Director
Jamuna Rail Bridge Project

GD-2527

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

The measles outbreak is a dismal scandal

Govt must act as per the review committee's recommendations

Measles is among the most preventable diseases. A two-dose course of a cheap, decades-old vaccine protects almost every child who receives it. Despite that, 1,177 people have died of the disease in Bangladesh this year, and the outbreak is not over. It is a scandal of the worst kind because every one of these deaths was preventable. Worse, it is the outcome of years of neglect by successive governments that let vaccine stocks run dry, left key posts empty, and postponed campaigns that would have saved lives.

A joint independent review, reported by Prothom Alo, explains how this happened. The review was assembled by the World Health Organization, Unicef, Gavi, and local health officials. Reportedly, 849,619 children missed the measles vaccine over a five-year period. Stocks of the measles-rubella vaccine ran out in 2025. A follow-up campaign was due in 2024, was agreed on to be held in 2025, and was not held until April 2026.

The healthcare system's foundations were also found to be eroding. About 53 percent of cold-chain technician posts are vacant, as are 34 percent of health assistant and inspector posts in the field and 45 percent at the programme's headquarters. Some 90 percent of vaccinators in urban areas work for NGOs, with little oversight. A vaccinators' strike disrupted services for seven months last year. The review blames governments of every stripe, of which the authorities should take note. The coverage gaps predate the current government and persisted under both the Awami League and the interim administration.

Reportedly, 849,619 children missed the measles vaccine over a five-year period. Stocks of the measles-rubella vaccine ran out in 2025. A follow-up campaign was due in 2024, was agreed on to be held in 2025, and was not held until April 2026.

The present government has also responded too slowly and too narrowly: children over the age of five, who are among those at risk, were left out of its vaccination drive.

The government's handling of the data deserves scrutiny. Of 93,852 symptomatic patients whose samples were tested up to October 12, 73 percent had measles, according to figures presented by the review team. The health directorate, by contrast, counts just 22,840 confirmed cases among 208,570 suspected, at a rate of 11 percent. The two sets of figures are not comparable, but a low confirmation rate that reflects thin testing offers false comfort. The health minister, speaking at the review team's workshop, conceded that confidence in the quality of the vaccines Bangladesh administers is, for now, "an assumption". The government must establish a system to verify the integrity of its cold chain. The checks should be independent, and the results should be made public.

Blaming its predecessors for the crisis is not enough. Responsibility for empty vaccine stores, vacant posts, and missed campaigns now rests with those in office. The government must act on the review team's recommendations, which are sensible: ward-level micro-planning, filling vacancies, raising the age limits for campaigns, a digital registry to track who has been vaccinated, and a financing plan before Gavi support tapers off.

When can journos report without fear?

Govt must properly investigate Netrokona journalist's killing

We are dismayed by the killing of Lutfozzaman Fakir Alif, the Netrokona correspondent of private IPTV channel Ruposhi Bangla. On the night of October 15, at around 8:00pm, the journalist was shot at least five times by two attackers on a motorcycle while he was at a tea stall in Uttarail Bazar on the Shyamganj-Birishiri Road. Lutfozzaman was also known for running a Facebook page where he regularly posted about incidents of corruption in Netrokona. It is believed that the motivation behind his killing may have stemmed from one of his reports. The incident is yet another blow to our hopes for a government that would ensure journalists' safety and press freedom after years of waiting. Sadly, the wait continues.

Alarmingly, this is not the first time Lutfozzaman was attacked. On November 10 last year, unidentified assailants attacked him with a knife near Teribazar Ghat in Durgapur and threatened his colleague, who tried to intervene. Was the earlier incident thoroughly investigated by police, or do the attackers remain unidentified? Could the failure to deliver justice in the previous case have emboldened the assailants in Thursday's incident to shoot the journalist dead in public?

In May, Reporters Without Borders published its World Press Freedom Index 2026, wherein Bangladesh slipped three places down to 152nd. The country falls under the "very serious" category, which signals low press freedom and a high tally of abuses against media and journalists in connection with their work. Be it by the enactment of curtailing laws or brute force, press freedom remains under constant threat in the country. Journalists on the margins, especially grassroots and university correspondents, bear the brunt as they are more accessible. What frustrates us is that no government over the years has been able to safeguard journalists, let alone fulfil its promises of ensuring press freedom. Meanwhile, cyber laws echoing the repressive elements of their predecessors continue to be drafted, further threatening the right of journalists to work freely.

What frustrates us is that no government over the years has been able to safeguard journalists, let alone fulfil its promises of ensuring press freedom.

We demand a transparent and complete investigation into the killing of Lutfozzaman Fakir Alif. Until grassroots journalists can report on corruption without fearing for their safety, no political party should claim itself to be pro-press freedom.

Bangladesh must answer for workers trafficked to war

BLOWIN' IN THE WIND



Dr Shamsad Mortuza is vice-chancellor at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB).

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

An investigation by the Special Response Battalion (SRB), the findings of which were announced at a press briefing on October 14, revealed that 30 young men recruited to work in Russia in various roles had been sent to the front lines of the Russia-Ukraine war as "baits" to identify the locations of their enemies. Among them, 20 died in drone attacks. The irony is, these men thought they had purchased a Tk-10-lakh lottery to change their lives. Little did they know that they would be entering an active war zone where human casualties were reduced to a mere number game.

A few international outlets picked up the news. Al Jazeera, Channel 4, and DW previously flagged the recruitment patterns of Russia, which was recruiting fighters from developing countries in South Asia and Africa. While going through these reports, I was drawn to the comment sections, where most Western commentators were labelling these fighters as "greedy". They rejected the idea that these men could have been tricked into fighting a war far away from their homelands. They argued that these men had signed a contract, and thereby were responsible for their actions. There were one or two who flipped the argument to ask, "What about the foreign fighters fighting for Ukraine?"

I watched video clips of some of these recruits in combat uniforms. They were showing how the land was strewn with dead bodies. Both old and fresh bodies were lying in body bags. Per the SRB report, they were sent to the battlefield with only three weeks of training, where they were systematically hounded by drones. The drones would give images of their targets for one last time before the explosions happened. The situation is akin to a video game where reality has been transported to a virtual image-driven world. Only, in this case, these men were not players with joysticks and chosen avatars.

In July, we heard the expatriates' welfare minister telling parliament that 30 Bangladeshi men had travelled to Russia on April 24 with valid manpower clearance from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) through three recruitment agencies. The minister acknowledged confirmed deaths and highlighted the government's salvage mission through diplomatic channels. However, the recent figure of deaths reported by SRB requires a dated explanation. Are we to assume that these 20 out of 30 killed are the same cohort who went to Russia in April?

Russia and Ukraine engaged in a prolonged war. They can afford to adopt an existential spirit and a philosophical tone, claiming that everything is fair in love and war. But for us, the question is legal and ethical. We need to own up to these deaths instead of simply saying some foreign forces used our humans as decoys for their hunt. We need to ask: who approved the jobs? Who issued the employer demand letters, embassy verification, BMET clearances, and the contracts shown to the aspiring workers? Who received the money for their payments, intermediary commissions, and any payments linked to military enlistment? When did the officials get to know? Did they learn it from the complaints of the families first? What diplomatic measures is the government taking to address the allegation of dangerous deployment of our men for tactical military purposes?

Will the government come forward with medical care for the wounded, debt relief and compensation for the victims' families, protect the whistleblowers, and chase criminal proceedings if needed?

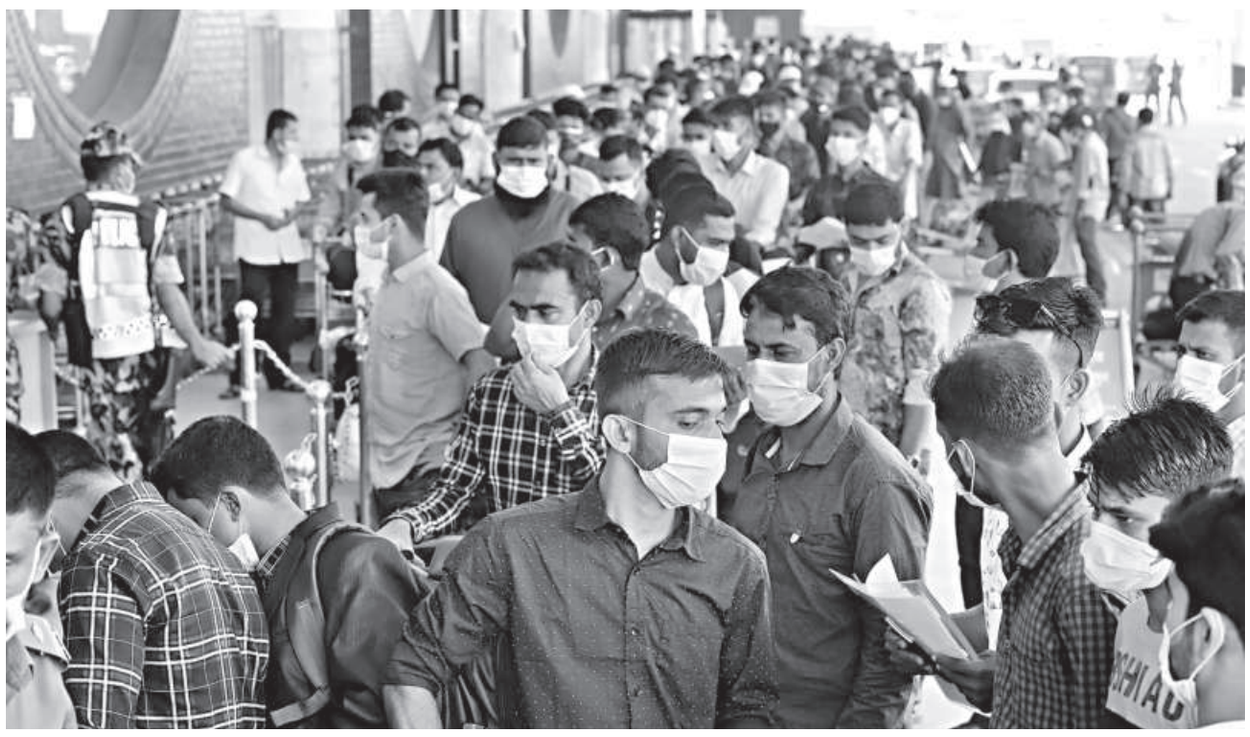
We need to sort out our mess before we blame others. But it seems we are more interested in creating a larger mess. On June 1, *Prothom Alo* reported that the government had revoked the licences of three recruitment agencies linked to the scam and launched diplomatic efforts to bring back the 30 migrants, some of whom shared footage of the front lines. This contrasts another report published on June 9, which quoted a foreign ministry statement to report that Bangladesh had proposed to increase its workforce in Russia from approximately 10,000 to 100,000 within a year. How can we consider fattening the supply chain with allegations of coerced recruitment in the air?

Should we think we are no longer "choosers" because our economy relies heavily on the remittance dollars sent by migrant workers? The decline in our RMG exports has not helped the situation either. True, we need to expand lawful overseas employment, but shouldn't we be careful in choosing a country as our work destination where military recruitment poses a documented risk?

In a chilling Channel 4 video, one Bangladeshi admits that he was recruited as a maintenance operator after paying lakhs of taka to an agent. An AP report quoted another Bangladeshi migrant as saying that after his arrival in Russia, he was forced into going to the battlefield as the employer simply said, "We bought you." These admissions don't support any idea that Bangladesh knowingly sold its workers. But a thorough audit of institutional processes is needed. Equally important is the need for assessing how the recruitment system itself produces desperation among fortune seekers. The true incentive for these individuals is the promise of a ticket to a better livelihood. But once they cross the border, they lose control over their labour and movement and are eventually exposed to death. As a nation, what safeguards are there to protect these labour-export ambitions?

There is a real cost to this ambition. Bangladesh's 2022 Labour Force Survey puts recruitment costs at approximately 14.6 months of migrant earnings, rising to 15.1 months for men. The figures show the burden these migrants end up carrying before earning anything abroad. Recovering the costs also takes longer when earnings must cover living expenses and interest. An aspiring migrant worker borrows to obtain employment. Often the promised employment fails. If lucky, they return home alive. Irrespective of the fact, returning home often leaves the debt intact. For many, the only way to recover the first investment is attempting a second desperate venture. Debt can thereby encourage trafficking, giving leverage to recruiters. This problem extends beyond Russia. UN experts have examined allegations of fraudulent recruitment of Bangladeshis to Malaysia involving non-existent jobs and debt bondage. The complacency and vested interests of some agencies here have allowed these malpractices to thrive.

We need to build a counternarrative that provides our migrant workers with full disclosure, legal support, and linguistic aid before they agree to migrate, pay a broker, or sign a contract. Our migrants need to challenge the notion that signing a contract makes a claims deception or coercion void. This is where our foreign missions must be proactive. They need to stand by our nationals who probably unwittingly gave consent to some prohibited means of trafficking. Fraudulent civilian employment offers cannot be converted to purely military work. The allegation of trafficking into military service is dangerous. We hope our government will support our nationals and encourage its counterpart to investigate the issue. The desperation of our citizens does not give a foreign entity the right to make a game of us.



Our migrant workers must be provided with full disclosure, legal support, and linguistic aid before they agree to migrate, pay a broker, or sign an overseas job contract.

FILE PHOTO: **SK ENAMUL HAQ**

How to make climate finance more equitable



Dr Mohammad Emran Hasan is head of climate justice and natural resources rights at Oxfam Bangladesh.

MOHAMMAD EMRAN HASAN

Bangladesh has established a National Committee on Climate Finance at a critical moment, with COP31 approaching and the gap between global climate-finance commitments and actual needs remaining enormous. Chaired by the prime minister, the committee is tasked with setting priorities, mobilising resources, and engaging international climate funds. But its real test goes beyond securing money: can Bangladesh demonstrate what it needs, negotiate effectively, and ensure finance reaches those facing the greatest climate risks?

This challenge involves two interconnected journeys. The first is availing climate finance: building credible evidence of climate impacts and financing needs, negotiating adequate global commitments, and accessing international funding mechanisms. The second is disbursing that finance: allocating resources transparently and equitably according to actual risks and needs.

COP31, scheduled for November 9-20, 2026 in Antalya, Türkiye, offers an opportunity. Its provisional agendas include long-term climate finance, guidance to climate funds, and discussions relating to Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement on developed countries' financial obligations. Ahead of COP31, Bangladesh could develop a coordinated negotiating position combining community-reported losses, geospatial vulnerability assessments, quantified adaptation needs, and financing gaps. Such evidence could strengthen collective claims by Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and other climate-vulnerable nations. However, negotiating for finance and accessing it are two separate challenges. International funds require institutional readiness, credible proposals, safeguards, and accountability.

Securing finance is only half the equation. Once resources arrive, where should they go, and to whom? Two communities facing similar floods may suffer different losses because of poverty, livelihoods, infrastructure, and adaptive capacity. Women, persons with disabilities, and landless households may experience the same hazard differently.

Yet finance does not automatically follow this geography of vulnerability. Oxfam's assessment of the World Bank's 2017-2023 climate-finance portfolio identified potential differences of $24.28-$41.32 billion between budgeted and actual expenditures, with insufficient information to reliably track climate-specific spending. This does not demonstrate misuse, but highlights a serious transparency gap. Climate justice requires evidence-based allocation and accountability, not simply greater mobilisation.

Satellites can observe floods, erosion, and environmental change. Geospatial analysis can identify where hazards intersect with people and infrastructure. But climate justice cannot be sensed from space alone. Satellite imagery may identify a flooded village, but cannot fully explain how repeated flooding pushes families into debt, disrupts education or destroys livelihoods. Community experience captures these realities, while science helps establish their wider patterns. Connecting these different ways of knowing underpins what I propose as the three senses approach: social-sensing, science-sensing, and common-sensing.

Social-sensing enables climate-affected communities to produce evidence through citizen science, participatory monitoring, local knowledge and accessible digital reporting. It captures lived experiences, losses and needs that conventional datasets frequently overlook. Science-sensing brings together community observations, climate research, satellite imagery, geographical analysis, and socioeconomic data to build a more comprehensive picture of climate impacts. It validates, contextualises, and scales community evidence across locations and time.

Common-sensing translates this combined intelligence into negotiation, policy, and resource-allocation decisions. It helps determine what finance countries should claim, which funding opportunities to pursue, and where resources should flow.

In short, social-sensing tells us what people experience. Science-sensing explains where, why, and to what extent impacts occur. Common-sensing turns evidence into decisions.

Bangladesh's emerging Loss & Damage Dashboard illustrates the first journey. By combining community-generated loss reports with geolocation, climate information, and Earth observation, it can turn individual experiences into structured evidence. If comparable approaches were adopted across LDCs, evidence could be aggregated from households to communities, countries, and collective international claims, strengthening climate-finance negotiations.

In Bangladesh, Oxfam's initiative to develop a Climate Risk Index combines hazard, exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity, and could help identify locations and populations facing disproportionate climate risks and support more equitable allocation. Such tools are examples of the approach, not the approach itself: one demonstrates how evidence can travel upwards to strengthen claims, while the other shows how evidence can guide finance back towards vulnerable communities.

The process should not end with disbursement. Did finance reach intended communities? Did vulnerability decline? Were marginalised people included? Answers generate new evidence, strengthening future decisions and negotiations. Climate finance should operate as a continuous cycle connecting community experience, scientific evidence, international claims, access, risk-informed allocation, and accountability.

Bangladesh already possesses many foundations for this approach: community knowledge, climate research, Earth observation capabilities, digital technologies, and decades of climate diplomacy. Its National Committee on Climate Finance offers an opportunity to connect them, ahead of COP31 and beyond.

Success should not be measured only by how much climate finance crosses national borders, but by how credibly needs are established, how effectively resources are accessed, how equitably they are distributed and how transparently results are demonstrated.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

Why is our economic growth failing to reduce poverty?



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■ **SELIM RAIHAN**

Bangladesh presents a discomforting policy puzzle. The economy has continued to grow, yet poverty has been rising. According to the World Bank, the poverty rate has increased for four consecutive years, with around 80 lakh people falling below the poverty line over this period. At the same time, roughly 6.25 crore people remain vulnerable to poverty, meaning that even a modest loss of income or an unexpected expense could push them below the line. This is more than a reversal in one social indicator and raises a larger question about the quality of growth and the ability of the economy to protect earlier gains in poverty reduction.

A growth in GDP by itself does not tell us much about whether households are becoming more economically secure. If millions of people are falling back into poverty while many others remain one shock away, the issue is not simply about how fast the economy is growing. It is how income is being generated, how widely the gains are being shared, and whether households have enough resilience to withstand economic shocks.

For many years, Bangladesh's growth story was accompanied by falling poverty, rising exports and remittances, and improvements in several social indicators. However, that correlation has weakened. A growth in GDP by itself does not tell us much about whether households are becoming more economically secure. If millions of people are falling back into poverty while many others remain one shock away, the issue is not simply about how fast the economy is growing. It is how income is being generated, how widely the gains are being shared, and whether households have enough resilience to withstand economic shocks.

Persistent inflation has played a major role in this deterioration. Poorer households spend a large proportion of their income on food. Better-off households can respond to higher prices by reducing savings or cutting discretionary expenditure. The choices of poor households are harder. They reduce the quantity or quality of food, postpone medical treatment, cut education expenses, or borrow to meet basic needs. The effect accumulates when inflation remains high for several years. Therefore, even where nominal earnings increase, purchasing power can fall.

The labour market has offered little protection against this pressure. Most workers in Bangladesh remain in informal employment, where wages are generally low, contracts are weak or absent, and social insurance is limited. Nominal wage growth has frequently failed to compensate for rising living costs. At the same time, weak private investment has constrained the creation of productive, better-paid jobs. Many educated young people struggle to find employment suited to their skills; progress in women's employment remains inadequate; and small and medium enterprises face high borrowing costs, energy constraints, and uncertain demand.

An economy can expand without creating enough good jobs. But such growth will have a weaker effect on poverty because labour income remains the main source of livelihood for most households. When job creation is slow, wages are under pressure, and employment remains overwhelmingly informal; households that have only recently escaped poverty can easily fall back under.



People crowd in long queues to purchase subsidised essentials from trucks operated by the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) in Dhaka on February 18, 2026.

FILE PHOTO: **REUTERS**

The 6.25 crore people classified as vulnerable, therefore, deserve at least as much policy attention as those already below the poverty line. Poverty statistics draw a line, but household welfare does not change abruptly on either side of it. A family just above the threshold may have little savings and no insurance. Illness, unemployment, crop loss, a flood, or another rise in food prices may be enough to reverse years of progress.

Yet Bangladesh's social protection system is poorly designed for this kind of vulnerability. It remains dominated by allowances and fragmented programmes. There is some support after people become poor, but far less protection against the risks that make them poor. Unemployment protection is absent. Financial protection against illness remains weak. Social insurance covers only a small fraction of workers, while the informal economy remains largely outside contributory protection.

In fact, the fall in subsidised food distribution in the first quarter of the current fiscal year indicates a lack of attention in this area. Cutting food distribution at such a time risks worsening food insecurity and indebtedness, while forcing households to spend less on health and education. With about half of the poorest households still outside social protection programmes, fiscal pressures should lead to better targeting, not weaker essential support.

The institutional weaknesses are well known: targeting errors, fragmentation across programmes, weak coordination, limited monitoring, and inadequate grievance mechanisms. Local political influence can also affect beneficiary selection. Some households with genuine need therefore remain excluded, while scarce resources do not always reach those for whom they are intended.

There is a broader political-economy problem behind this, as economic risks are not shared equally in Bangladesh. Organised and influential groups are often better able to obtain policy concessions, regulatory protection or financial relief. Large loan defaulters have repeatedly benefited from restructuring and other concessions. Some businesses enjoy tax exemptions or protection from competition. Regulatory enforcement becomes more difficult when powerful economic interests are involved.

The state and the financial system can absorb part of the cost when influential borrowers fail, but the losses of poorer households largely remain their own. This unequal distribution of risk is not merely an equity issue. It also undermines economic efficiency by directing resources and policy attention to those with more influence, rather than to the most productive or socially valuable uses.

Market governance has also compounded the pressure of inflation. Concerns about competition in food markets, imports, transport, fuel distribution, and wholesale trade have long been raised. International price rises are usually transmitted rapidly to domestic consumers, but international price declines are not always transmitted so rapidly. Administrative drives and occasional fines may address visible symptoms, but they cannot substitute for functioning competition policy, transparent market information, and credible regulation.

The tax system has similar distributional weaknesses. Bangladesh is heavily dependent on indirect taxes, which puts a relatively heavier burden on low- and middle-income consumers. At the same time, revenue mobilisation from higher incomes, wealth, and other potential tax bases remains weak. Tax exemptions, evasion, and preferential treatment further narrow the fiscal space available for health, education, and social protection. The problem is therefore not simply that Bangladesh collects too little tax. It is also about who pays, who receives exemptions, and how public resources are subsequently allocated.

These choices reflect political incentives. Large infrastructure projects are visible and easy to present as evidence of development. Income security, effective primary healthcare, unemployment protection, or improvements in school quality are less visible. Yet these are precisely the investments that determine whether households can withstand a shock without falling into poverty. Development policy becomes unbalanced when what is politically visible consistently receives greater attention than what improves household resilience.

The policy response should, therefore, start from the causes rather than the symptoms. Bringing inflation down remains essential, but monetary policy alone cannot do it. Food supply, import management, market competition, energy pricing, and transport costs also matter. Social protection needs to move gradually from fragmented allowances towards lifecycle-based protection and social insurance, including mechanisms for health shocks, workplace injury and income loss. Targeting and administrative coordination must improve at the same time.

Above all, productive employment has to return to the centre of the poverty-reduction strategy. That requires stronger private investment, a healthier banking system, better conditions for small and medium enterprises, skills that match labour demand, and greater opportunities for women and young people. None of these reforms is easy, because each confronts institutional weaknesses and, in some cases, established interests.

Eighty lakh people falling into poverty in four years should not be treated simply as a demand for more poverty programmes. Nor should the vulnerability of more than six crore people be seen as a temporary consequence of inflation. Both point to a deeper weakness: Bangladesh isn't as good at converting economic growth into secure livelihoods. The priority now is not merely to push households above a statistical poverty line. It is to build an economy in which they have a reasonable chance of staying there.

An active Information Commission is vital to democracy

Dr Shamsul Bari and Ruhi Naz are, respectively, chairman and deputy director (RTI) at Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB). They can be reached at rib@citech-bd.com.

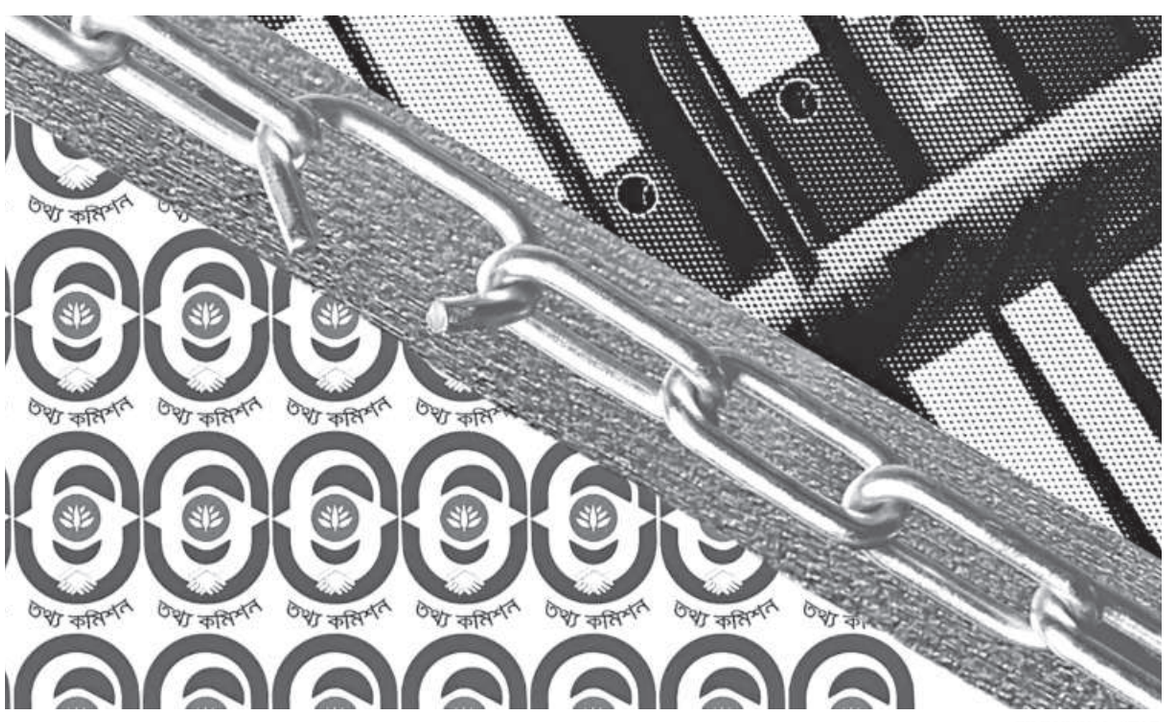
■ **SHAMSUL BARI** *and* **RUHI NAZ**

The Right to Information (RTI) is widely regarded as a tool for promoting transparency and exposing corruption. But its democratic significance goes far beyond that. It enables citizens to question arbitrary decisions, challenge unfair treatment, scrutinise public expenditure, and determine whether public institutions are fulfilling their responsibilities. RTI is not simply about obtaining documents; it also ensures that those exercising public power remain accountable to the people.

Recent experiences in India and Sri Lanka illustrate these wider possibilities. They also offer important lessons for Bangladesh, where the RTI Act provides citizens with similar legal rights. Unfortunately, the law's effectiveness has been seriously undermined by the prolonged absence of the three information commissioners for over two years.

An instructive example comes from India, where RTI applications have examined whether the Election Commission of India (ECI) and government departments have complied with Supreme Court directives to revise electoral rolls, a subject that has roiled the nation recently.

In an article published in The Wire on October 9, 2026, prominent RTI activist Venkatesh Nayak described how he sought information from the ECI and the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) regarding action taken following the court's directives concerning individuals whose citizenship had been questioned during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.



FILE VISUAL: **STAR**

The Supreme Court distinguished between determining eligibility for voter registration and formally deciding citizenship. It directed the ECI to refer relevant cases to the competent authority under the Citizenship Act for adjudication. The distinction is crucial: exclusion from an electoral roll does not automatically determine a person's citizenship.

Nayak sought details of cases referred for adjudication, the authorities responsible, and communications exchanged between the ECI and the government. The responses raised troubling questions. The ECI initially said it did not hold the requested information, but later transferred the applications between departments. Responses also exceeded the statutory 30-day deadline.

The fundamental question is straightforward: how can citizens determine whether judicial directives are being implemented when responsible authorities cannot provide clear information about the action taken?

This case's significance extends beyond India's electoral system. Nayak used RTI to seek documentary evidence of compliance with a legal obligation, rather than relying on official assurances. Although the responses don't conclusively establish that the directives were ignored, they expose weaknesses in administrative accountability.

This illustrates an essential democratic function of RTI: enabling citizens to compare what the law requires with what public authorities actually do.

Sri Lanka offers another example of RTI's importance in protecting individual rights. In one case, its Right to Information Commission directed its health ministry to disclose two complaint letters a doctor facing disciplinary proceedings had sought. The ministry refused disclosure, arguing that an investigation was in progress. The commission found that the ministry had failed to show how releasing the letters would prejudice the investigation.

The principle is important. A person facing disciplinary proceedings must have a fair opportunity to know and respond to the allegations. An ongoing investigation cannot automatically justify withholding relevant information. Access to documents may be indispensable to securing a fair hearing.

Sri Lankan citizens have also used RTI to establish whether police acted on complaints and to obtain records explaining administrative decisions. Such cases demonstrate how access to information can help identify official failures, challenge arbitrary decisions, and seek remedies. They also reinforce the principle that secrecy must be justified under specific legal exemptions rather than treated as the normal practice of government.

India's experience highlights another obstacle: delay. In *Shailesh Gandhi vs Maharashtra State Information Commission* (2025), the Bombay High Court emphasised that second appeals, equivalent to Bangladesh's complaint mechanism, should be decided expeditiously, even where the law prescribes no specific deadline. The lesson applies equally to Bangladesh. A right that takes years to enforce may become meaningless to someone seeking information to challenge an injustice.

These examples show that RTI can protect individual rights, expose administrative shortcomings, and help determine whether public authorities are complying with their legal responsibilities. Access to information by itself does not guarantee justice, but it provides the evidence citizens need to pursue accountability through administrative or judicial channels.

For Bangladesh, these lessons are particularly relevant. Citizens can use the RTI Act to scrutinise public procurement, development expenditure, recruitment, delivery of essential services, and implementation of government policies. Journalists and civil society organisations can use it to verify official claims, trace public expenditure, and examine whether promised measures have actually been implemented.

RTI can also transform individual grievances into matters of wider public concern. Information on a delayed development project, an unexplained recruitment decision, or the failure to deliver public services can provide the factual basis for public debate and corrective action.

However, these rights depend on a functioning enforcement mechanism. The Information Commission in Bangladesh has remained without its three commissioners for over two years, depriving citizens of the statutory body responsible for adjudicating complaints and enforcing compliance. This institutional paralysis threatens to undermine the law's very purpose.

The government must, therefore, act without further delay to restore the commission to full functionality. Citizens must also be encouraged to exercise their rights, while public authorities must recognise that providing information is a legal obligation, not an administrative favour.

Democracy cannot be sustained by elections alone. Citizens must be able to examine how decisions are made, how public money is spent, and whether those entrusted with authority are performing their duties.

India's experience demonstrates how RTI can test compliance with judicial directions. Sri Lanka's experience shows its value in protecting individual rights and challenging unjustified secrecy. Both underline a fundamental truth: democracy requires not just the right to vote but also the continuing right to question those who govern.

Ultimately, RTI enables citizens to move from suspicion to evidence, from unanswered questions to documented facts, and from passive acceptance to informed participation. Its true democratic value emerges when citizens can use information to demand accountability and seek remedies. Hence, for Bangladesh, restoring a fully functioning Information Commission is a test of the government's commitment to democratic accountability and the people's right to know.

TETULIA where winter whispers early

From tea gardens and the winding Mahananda to fleeting glimpses of Kanchenjunga, Bangladesh's northernmost upazila offers a quiet escape into nature

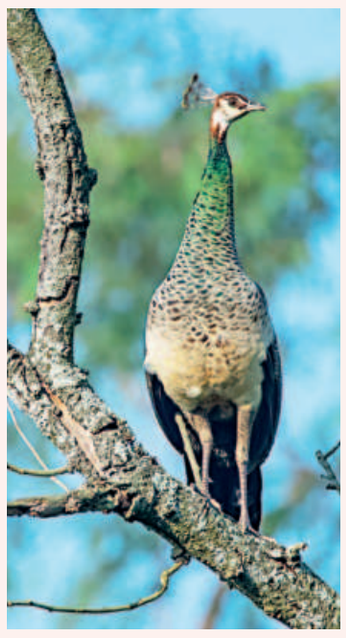














PHOTO: **FIROZ AL SABAH, MOSTAFA SHABUJ**

MOSTAFA SHABUJ

As summer loosens its grip on the rest of Bangladesh, Tetulia begins to feel the first whisper of winter. Wrapped in endless shades of green, the country's northernmost upazila offers a refreshing escape, where tea gardens stretch towards the horizon, the Mahananda river winds through the landscape, and the distant peaks of Kanchenjunga occasionally emerge against the sky.

In early October, when Dhaka swelters at 33–35 degrees Celsius, temperatures in Tetulia are often 2–5 degrees lower than in other parts of the country.

The journey from Panchagarh to the country's northernmost upazila unfolds through emerald paddy fields, low-lying tea gardens and tea factories, where processed leaves leave a henna-like fragrance in the air. Near Dak Bungalow Eco Park, along the Mahananda River on the Bangladesh-India border, the evening air carries the scent of wild Chatim flowers.

Tetulia town itself is adorned with colourful flower gardens, a community tradition dating back to the British era.

Autumn mornings bring another spectacle. Silvery plumes of kans grass (kash phool) sway along the riverbanks, where thousands of labourers begin extracting sand and stone as early as 5:00am. Farmers working in paddy fields, fishermen casting different types of nets in open water bodies, and schoolchildren cycling along paved roads are common sights that may evoke nostalgia in many.

Yet, for many travellers, Tentulia's greatest attraction lies far beyond its tea gardens and rivers.

Some 150 to 155 kilometres away rises Mount Kanchenjunga, the world's third-highest peak. On clear mornings, its snow-covered summit can be seen from different parts of Panchagarh, offering a rare glimpse of the Himalayas from Bangladesh.

But the mountain is elusive.

Locals say Kanchenjunga is generally visible between October and December, when conditions are favourable. Even then, catching a glimpse of the majestic peak requires patience and a bit of luck.

During the last week of October and the first week of November in 2022, I was fortunate enough to see the mountain twice.

This year, however, my six-day stay in Tetulia, from October 3 to 8, brought no such reward.

Every morning, I joined hundreds of visitors at the Dak Bungalow overlooking the Mahananda. All eyes were fixed on the distant horizon, waiting for the clouds to part and the mountain to appear.

The wait this year ended in disappointment, but the anticipation itself seemed part of the experience.

Few people know this elusive spectacle better than local photographer Firoz Al Sabah, whose photographs of Kanchenjunga and wildlife have helped showcase Tetulia's beauty to travellers in different ways.

For the past 15 years, Firoz's experience



has taught him the conditions that make it visible.

On the night of October 5, I sat with him beside the Mahananda. Beyond the tea gardens, lights along the Indian border shimmered in the darkness, their reflections dancing on the river's cool, flowing water.

Firoz described seeing Kanchenjunga from Panchagarh as nothing short of a miracle.

According to him, the air becomes exceptionally thin the day before the mountain is likely to appear. He regards the sensation of that thin breeze as a sign of favourable visibility the following morning.

Across the 150-kilometre stretch, clouds, rain, fog and pollution can easily obscure the mountain. Firoz said heavy rainfall in October helps clear the atmosphere by settling pollution particles.

Another sign, he said, is the visibility of thousands of lights in Kurseong, a hill town in India's Darjeeling, which can sometimes be seen with the naked eye from Tetulia on the preceding night.

Beyond Kanchenjunga, the region offers its own surprises, from wildlife encounters to historical landmarks.

During winter, wild peacocks occasionally cross into forests near the Indian border. Firoz said a peacock was reported breeding at a site in Tetulia this year.

He believes the birds could return permanently to Bangladesh if suitable, secure habitats are ensured. According to the 2015 IUCN Red List, the species is extinct in the wild in Bangladesh.

Another elusive bird, the Black Francolin, inhabits the tea gardens. Found nowhere else in Bangladesh outside Panchagarh, it breeds during summer. Its distinctive mating calls make it easier to locate during April, May and June, before it retreats into relative obscurity for the rest of the year.

History has also left its imprint on the landscape.

The Rock Museum, established in 1997 by Dr Nazmul Haque, then principal of Panchagarh Government Women's College, houses hundreds of geological, archaeological and anthropological specimens that offer insights into the sub-Himalayan region's history and culture.

About 17 kilometres from Panchagarh town, in Mirzapur village of Atwari upazila, stands the Mirzapur Shahi Mosque. Archaeologists believe it was built in 1665 during the Mughal era by Sheikh Malek Uddin Akhtaruzzaman. With its intricate craftsmanship and ornamentation, the mosque remains a place of worship, where villagers continue to offer their five daily prayers.

Another historical attraction is Maharajar Dighi in Bhitargarh, under Amarkhana union of Panchagarh Sadar upazila, 16 kilometres from the district town.

Spread across more than 54 acres and surrounded by greenery, the reservoir is believed to be at least 1,500 years old. Local folklore links it to King Jaleshwar or King Prithu, who is believed to have ordered its excavation. Ancient brick-built steps and ghats remain bearing the stamp of time.

Tetulia's growing appeal has also transformed local tourism. Since 2022, more than 40 hotels, motels and cottages have opened through private, government and NGO initiatives. A Tourist Police Zone has also been established.

Depending on the amenities, room rates range from Tk 1,000 to Tk 4,500 per night.

As tourist numbers peak between October and December, booking well in advance is advisable.

Travellers can reach Panchagarh from Dhaka by bus, with fares ranging from Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,700, or by the Ekota, Drutojan or Panchagarh Express trains, with fares between Tk 550 and Tk 2,000. Alternatively, they can fly to Saidpur Airport and travel by road for about three hours to reach Tetulia.

Travelling through this beautiful region, however, comes with a challenge. Hundreds of trucks carrying sand and stone along the Banglabandha-Panchagarh road raise clouds of dust, causing considerable discomfort to visitors and highlighting the need for an alternative bypass.



Despite the inconvenience, Tetulia retains its quiet charm. Even when Kanchenjunga stays hidden behind the clouds, the tea gardens, riverbanks, cool evenings and unhurried pace of life make the journey worthwhile.

Mustafa Sabuj, Bogura correspondent of The Daily Star, is a travel enthusiast.

Want to share your travel experiences with us? Please send your stories to holiday@thedailystar.net



PHOTO: **FIROZ AL SABAH**

'Reporting cost him his life'

FROM PAGE 1

yesterday while waiting outside the morgue at Netrokona Modern Sadar Hospital for his brother's autopsy.

"My brother's fault was that he reported about border smuggling, spoke out against drug dealers and exposed irregularities. These are what cost him his life."

Alif worked as the Netrokona correspondent for IPTV channel Ruposhi Bangla. He also ran a Facebook page called "Detective Article", where he regularly wrote about corruption, irregularities, and criminal activities.

Around 8:00pm on Thursday, unidentified assailants shot dead Alif, 44, of Dhitpur Shunui village in Netrokona's Kalmakanda upazila, in the Telonjia area of Durgapur, where he used to live with his family.

Before that, criminals hacked him in the upazila's Teribazar Ghat area on November 10 last year.

According to locals, Alif was chatting with others at a shop when two arrived on a motorcycle and opened fire. Hearing the gunshots, locals rushed to the spot, but the attackers fled on the bike.

This correspondent visited the slain journalist's home in the Telonjia area yesterday morning and found the family members stricken with grief.

Alif's wife Anondita Sangma, said, "Shortly before the incident, Alif came home from the shop and then left again. I thought he would return soon, so I was waiting for him with our one-and-a-half-year-old son, Ayan Safwan, and our daughter, Pranto."

Then someone came and told her that her husband was shot. "What was his fault? He only spoke out against irregularities. Did he have to be killed for that?" she asked.

Asked about any development in the murder investigation, Md Tarikul Islam, superintendent of Netrokona police, told The Daily Star, "Multiple teams from the police, Detective Branch, and Criminal Investigation Department are working to identify the attackers."

A five-member probe team, led by the additional superintendent of police (crime), has also been formed, he said.

"An operation is underway to quickly identify and arrest those involved in the killing. Checkpoints have been set up at various locations. No one involved will be spared," the SP added.

The papaya paradox

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yesterday found that most vegetables were selling for Tk 50-100 per kg, while beans, tomatoes and carrots cost Tk 150-220 per kg.

Green papaya, which sold for as much as Tk 80-100 per kg around the same time last year, has become one of the cheapest vegetables.

Traders said many had advanced substantial sums to farmers in several districts, expecting another profitable season. However, increased production has led to an oversupply, pushing prices down sharply.

Sher Ali Pathan, a papaya wholesaler at Karwan Bazar for 47 years, said he advanced Tk 3 crore to farmers in five districts after prices remained high last year. "I sold papaya at Tk 6-7 per kg over the past few days. Last Monday, the price fell to Tk 4. Yet, the transportation cost alone for bringing papaya to Dhaka from Chuadanga and Jashore exceeds Tk 4 per kg," he said.

"After advancing Tk 3 crore, I doubt whether I will be able to recover even Tk 50 lakh. I do not know how I will repay my bank loans and interest," he added.

Rafiqul Islam, who brought three tonnes of papaya from Singair in Manikganj to Karwan Bazar, said cultivation costs, including land rent, seeds and fertilisers, amounted to Tk 10-12 per kg. Transportation and labour added another Tk 3, taking the total cost to Tk 13-15 per kg. "I had to sell the papaya for Tk 6-8 per kg, incurring a loss of more than half the cost for every kilogramme," he said.

Dr Md Hazrat Ali, director of the Horticulture Wing at the Department of Agricultural Extension, said both cultivation and production had increased this year. "The cultivation of imported hybrid papaya varieties has expanded significantly, and production has risen across several districts as more farmers have brought land under papaya cultivation."

Meanwhile, low-income consumers and roadside eateries are benefiting from the price slump.

Amir Hossain, who runs a makeshift restaurant in Shewrapara, said rising LPG prices had increased cooking costs. He previously used pointed gourd, yard-long beans and hyacinth beans to prepare vegetable dishes.

To cut costs, he now makes a stir-fry with green papaya and potatoes, selling each portion for Tk 20. "Earlier, I needed five kilogrammes of papaya a day. Now I buy 20 kilogrammes," he said.

Rahima Begum, who supplies meals to a mess accommodating 30 people in Pashcim Rajabazar, said prices of fish, meat, oil and lentils had increased.

"Only papaya, bottle gourd and potatoes are relatively cheap in the market. So, I have increased the use of papaya in our daily meals," she said.

Mosharaf Hossain, who has been selling vegetables at Karwan Bazar for 45 years, said he had never seen papaya prices fall so sharply.

Middle East crisis threatens a lifeline

FROM PAGE 1

6.2 crore remain vulnerable to falling into poverty after an economic shock.

Rezaul's case is part of a wider vulnerability created by Bangladesh's heavy dependence on overseas employment, particularly in the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh's largest overseas labour market, is at the centre of the latest disruption. Attacks by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels and security restrictions at Saudi airports have disrupted flights, raising uncertainty for workers trying to enter the country and those already there.

As of October 14, restrictions had disrupted 100 flights and affected around 15,400 Bangladeshi passengers.

Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC's Migration Programme and Youth Platform, said, "Missing flights for even a single day creates uncertainty for 1,000-1,500 people travelling to Saudi Arabia."

BEYOND STRANDED PASSENGERS

Many Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia depend on daily or weekly work, and employment opportunities have declined amid the security concerns, said Shariful.

A total of 33,611 Bangladeshi workers have returned from Saudi Arabia since the beginning of this year, according to him.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the crisis was putting Bangladesh's overseas labour market under three kinds of pressure.

These are: declining incomes for some workers already abroad, uncertainty for those unable to travel after taking loans and buying tickets, and fewer workers going abroad.

"If the crisis is not resolved soon, these three pressures will intensify further in the coming days," Mustafizur said.

The economic condition of the affected families would certainly deteriorate, but further research would be required to determine whether they actually fall below the poverty line, he added.

Mustafa K Mujeri, executive director of the Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development, said many unskilled workers spend their first three to four years abroad repaying migration loans. Only after clearing those debts can they use their earnings to improve their families' living standards.

"If these workers cannot return to their jobs abroad, or if their departure is delayed or they face other uncertainties, they may lose that opportunity," he said.

An ADB study released in March warned that Bangladesh and other South Asian countries could see lower remittances from the ME as the conflict weakens labour demand and squeezes migrant incomes.

Even if stranded workers eventually travel, their jobs may no longer be available if employers recruit replacements, Mujeri said.

Such disruptions could also slow remittance growth, which has supported Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves and external balance over the past one and a half to two years.

SHRINKING OPTIONS

Shariful said Bangladesh was becoming increasingly dependent on Saudi Arabia as recruitment from the United Arab Emirates had declined, while job markets in Oman and Bahrain had remained virtually closed to Bangladeshi workers for years. "Job markets for migrant workers are closing one after another. This is really concerning," he said.

The wider conflict also raises questions about the future of the Middle East as a destination for migrant workers, he said.

Greater caution among investors could affect construction, tourism and other sectors that employ migrants, making it important for Bangladesh to diversify its overseas labour markets.

Saudi Arabia hosts around 3.5 million Bangladeshis.

The kingdom accounted for $1.95 billion, or 19.2 percent, of Bangladesh's total remittance inflows in the first three months of the current fiscal year, according to Bangladesh Bank data cited in recent reports.

Nearly half of Bangladesh's annual remittances of more than $30 billion come from the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, the UAE and Kuwait accounted for 86 percent of Bangladeshi workers who secured overseas jobs in FY2024-25, according to the Bangladesh Economic Review 2025.

An Asian Development Bank study released in March warned that Bangladesh and other South Asian countries could see lower remittances from the Middle East as the conflict weakens labour demand and squeezes migrant incomes.

Some workers have managed to avoid the worst consequences, at least for now.

Ridoy Ahmed, a painter whose flight was cancelled a day earlier, flew to Saudi Arabia's Prince Mohammad bin Abdulaziz International Airport on Wednesday evening, just two days before his visa expired.

"Otherwise, I don't know how much longer I would have had to wait or what would have happened to my family and me," he said by phone from the plane.

For families like Rezaul's, however, the stakes are more immediate: years of borrowing, working, and repaying debt can be undone by a crisis thousands of kilometres away.

Delhi cops detain CJP founder

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account said that she was detained and taken to an "unknown location".

"They don't have their phone! Delhi Police must answer: where is Neha? Once again an abduction, not detention!," the post further said.

Dipke called yesterday's protest in support of two Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) leaders detained and sent to jail this week for five days for demonstrating at a protest site in violation of a ban, reports Reuters.

The group and left-wing student organisations had urged supporters to gather at the Central Park in New Delhi's busy Connaught Place shopping and food district yesterday evening to wave and hoist the national flag.

The live video on CJP's Instagram handle showed Dipke coming out of a house and walking towards the street, where police officers stopped him and, after a brief argument, hauled him into a police car and drove away.

"We are placing you under preventive detention. Section 163 is in force in Connaught Place. You are being detained," a police officer could be heard telling Dipke, reports TOI.

"I have not broken any law right now... how can you detain me," Dipke asked the police officers as he was taken away.



Police officers detain All India Students' Association (AISA) President Neha Bora during a flag rally in New Delhi yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

According to officials, a notice issued on behalf of the New Delhi district authorities under the Delhi Police Act directed people not to visit Central Park, citing the restrictions in force under Section 163.

Senior police officer Sachin Sharma told news agency ANI that Dipke was served a notice that asked him to obey the law, and that he was informed of the implications of any violations.

Television images showed dozens of people arriving at Connaught Place amid heavy security, some of them waving small versions of the national flag.

Small protests were also held in financial capital Mumbai and tech hub Bengaluru, while student organisations held a demonstration in the eastern city of Patna, with people waving flags of their organisations and pushing against police barricades.

Dengue turns deadlier in October

FROM PAGE 12

16.1 percent from dengue with bleeding, while 12.5 percent died from other causes. Many patients also experienced diagnostic delays of at least three days.

Medicine specialist Dr ABM Abdullah said repeated infections and delays in diagnosis and treatment were major factors behind dengue deaths.

Patients infected for a second, third or fourth time may develop severe complications, increasing their risk of death, he said.

Prof Abdullah urged people, particularly children and those with underlying conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, heart, liver and kidney diseases, and cancer, not to ignore even mild symptoms.

People experiencing fever, body aches, vomiting, diarrhoea, sore throat or loss of appetite should seek medical advice and undergo testing when necessary, he said.

He warned against taking painkillers or other medicines without medical advice, as certain drugs could worsen complications.

Prof HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, expressed concern over inconsistent application of national dengue treatment guidelines.

He said treatment should depend on a patient's clinical condition, as a low platelet count alone did not necessarily warrant a transfusion.

Dengue claimed 148 lives in September, 43 in August, 36 in July, 13 in June and one in May.

"Unnecessary platelet transfusions, inappropriate fluid administration and excessive fluid loading can themselves contribute to complications and, in severe cases, death," he said.

Prof Nazmul also called for more accessible dengue testing, particularly for low-income communities in urban and rural areas.

Public health expert Mushtuq Husain stressed the need for a three-tier dengue management system involving primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare facilities to reduce deaths and ease pressure on major hospitals.

Under the proposed system, primary healthcare facilities would offer dengue detection and initial testing free or at low cost. Patients requiring closer monitoring would be referred to upazila health complexes and district hospitals, while medical colleges and specialised hospitals would handle severe cases.

In Dhaka, hospitals run by city corporations, the railway, banks and autonomous organisations could provide secondary care, he suggested. Primary healthcare centres should also have additional beds and necessary treatment facilities.

Such a system would reduce pressure on tertiary hospitals and ensure specialised care for critically ill patients, he said.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, said dengue cases might decline slightly in November, but a noticeable fall was unlikely before December. Continued rainfall could prolong the outbreak, he warned.

Citing a forecasting model, he said cases could continue rising for up to six weeks after the last rainfall.

Why stop us when govt supports women athletes?

FROM PAGE 12

administration and police to do so that you can play without facing these problems again?

SA: We just want to be able to go out and play without anyone stopping us. We want the administration to support us and encourage us, and tell us, "Go ahead, we are right beside you." If the authorities themselves are intimidated and tell us to stop playing, what can we expect? We want them to support us, not stop us.

DS: Do you think the match could have gone ahead if the administration and police had provided security?

SA: Yes, I think it could have. But we did not get the security we needed. We heard that our OC [local Officer-in-Charge] was on leave, so he could not be there.

DS: Some people opposed the match, claiming it was indecent and went against social values. What do you say to that?

SA: We wear modest sports clothes and behave properly when we play. We follow our own principles, so I do not understand why people are calling it indecent. These accusations are not fair. Women play sports in many countries, including Saudi Arabia. So why are people criticising us in Bangladesh in the name of indecency?

DS: How do you think the concerns of people who oppose girls playing football could be addressed?

SA: Sports organisations and the relevant authorities can take the initiative to explain things to people. We also have hope in the government. If it gives this issue importance and helps raise awareness, I think things can improve.

DS: Would it help if local leaders and religious teachers sat down with the authorities and the players to discuss the issue?

SA: Yes. If our DC sir [Deputy Commissioner] and UNO sir [Upazila Nirbahi Officer], along with other responsible officials, take the initiative to speak with everyone, they can explain that playing sports is not a crime.

DS: What can local young people and sports organisations do to support you?

SA: They can stand beside us and encourage us. If young people and the community support us, it will be harder for anyone to oppose us in this way.

How FB posts

FROM PAGE 1

on Facebook on October 12. Someone had recorded the conversation during an argument between the couple. Allegations that the audio contained remarks insulting religion sparked tension in the area.

HM Shaheen, officer-in-charge of Debhata Police Station, said people first beat Shamim at Kuliya Bazar, near his home, around 5:30pm on October 13. The attackers then took him to a local doctor's chamber, where they beat him again.

Police rescued Shamim around 6:00pm and took him to the upazila health complex.

The Daily Star found that, around 8:30pm, a procession led by Fazlul Haque Ameni, a local religious speaker, reached Debhata demanding Shamim's execution. Ameni addressed the crowd before leading more than 200 people to the health complex around 9:00pm.

The attackers dragged Shamim out and beat him again. Doctors, nurses and police tried to stop them but failed.

Around 10:40pm, police finally rescued Shamim and took him to Satkhira Medical College Hospital. However, he died before reaching the hospital, said Manoj Kumar Mondal, the attending medicine specialist.

Shamim's family said he had a history of mental health problems. He had completed a Kamil degree from a madrasa before earning bachelor's and master's degrees from Jagannath University. He leaves behind two children, aged eight years and seven months.

The Facebook posts examined by The Daily Star do not independently establish the allegation against him.

AMENI'S ROLE IN KILLING

The online campaign began hours before Shamim's death. At 3:31pm on October 13, Ameni went live on Facebook, accusing Shamim of insulting religion and demanding punishment. He named Shamim and identified his location as Putimari Bazar in Debhata.

The 19-minute, 19-second broadcast was followed by another live session at 5:31pm. The two broadcasts received 286 and 1,600 reactions, respectively, while the second was shared 3,600 times.

Over two days, Ameni published 12 posts that incited the crowd, justified the killing and threatened similar fates for future offenders.

At 9:15pm, Ameni labelled Shamim an apostate and declared there would be "no forgiveness", again specifying his location. Later that night, he published another post dehumanising Shamim and comparing his life to that of a "koi fish" -- a reference to his survival of previous beatings.

By midnight, Ameni's posts had shifted from the allegation to Shamim's death.

Ameni expressed gratitude while announcing the death. At the time of reporting, the post had received 879 reactions, 441 comments and 228 shares. Other posts echoed the sentiment, celebrating the death and urging people not to attend Shamim's funeral.

In his last five posts, Ameni sought to justify the killing, sharing, among other things, the audio recording of Shamim made during the family dispute.

When contacted by The Daily Star, Ameni said neighbours had sent him an audio clip two days before the attack in which Shamim allegedly made the derogatory remarks. He acknowledged being present during the second attack.

CELEBRATING THE KILLING

The response extended beyond Ameni's posts. Several Facebook users justified the killing, while some framed it as a warning to others.

Another Facebook user urged people to share the news so that the Prophet's (pbuh) "enemies" would know they could face the same fate. At the time of reporting, the post had received 611 reactions, 115 comments and 25 shares.

Nearly three-quarters of the 476 people who commented on Ameni's post after Shamim's death celebrated the killing.

Shamim's family said he had a history of mental health problems. He had completed a Kamil degree from a madrasa before earning bachelor's and master's degrees from Jagannath University.

Other posts sought to discredit questions about Shamim's mental health. On October 15, one post questioned why people described him as mentally ill, asking why someone with a mental illness would allegedly make such remarks.

Another mocked those questioning his mental condition, arguing that his ability to discuss religious texts disproved their claims.

'NO NEGLIGENCE', SAYS POLICE

Police have denied any negligence in the 10 hours between Ameni's first Facebook Live and Shamim's death.

"There was no negligence on the part of police. We rescued him after the first assault and remained alert," said HM Shaheen, OC of Debhata Police Station.

Police said they had arrested two people in a case filed by Shamim's elder brother, Abdul Jalil Sana. The arrestees are Mostafa Hossain Khan and Asadul Islam Molla. The prime accused, Ameni, remains at large. Police said they are trying to arrest him.

The Daily Star has contacted Meta Platforms, Inc, the parent company of Facebook, for comment and is awaiting a response.

[Our Satkhira correspondent contributed to this report.]

PM urges families to join dengue fight

FROM PAGE 12

dengue, saying public participation was essential to addressing the country's problems.

Referring to dengue deaths, Tarique said those who had lost loved ones to the disease understood the pain of such losses. Collective efforts to destroy mosquito breeding grounds could spare many families similar suffering, he added.

The PM said the country had around 2.5 crore students at schools, colleges and universities, while organisations such as the Bangladesh National Cadet Corps, Scouts, Girl Guides and Red Crescent had around 40 lakh members.

Members of these groups had been cleaning waste and rubbish across districts and upazilas every Saturday for about a month, he said.

Explaining the importance of such efforts, Tarique said Aedes mosquitoes breed in stagnant water, including water accumulating in corners of homes, along roads and in public spaces.

Although a dengue vaccine had been developed, he said studies had found it was not sufficiently effective, making the elimination of breeding grounds particularly important.

"A government succeeds when it works together with everyone," he said, adding that his government wanted to involve people across the country in addressing national problems.

He urged everyone to participate in the cleaning drive, expressing hope that collective efforts would help prevent dengue deaths.

Now rice adds to consumers' woes

FROM PAGE 12

"An increase of Tk 1 or Tk 2 per kg may not seem significant, but we fear further hikes as we are already struggling to manage our daily expenses," said Momotaz Begum, a resident of Tejkuni Para who runs a meal service.

She provides lunch and dinner to around 30 people, mostly day labourers who consume large quantities of rice, charging each Tk 150. "If I raise the price of lunch and dinner, I may lose my customers. They are unwilling to pay more, especially as I raised the rate from Tk 120 to Tk 150 about four and a half months ago," she said.

Momotaz said rising prices of other essentials, LPG and electricity bills had already squeezed her earnings and increased her debts. "If rice prices continue to rise, I will have no choice but to leave this business. A Tk 1 increase per kg has already raised my monthly expenses by Tk 360," she said.

Kamal Hossain, proprietor of Makbul Rice Agency at Mirpur-11 kitchen market, said prices of all rice varieties except Nazirshai had increased.

After remaining stable for months, rice prices rose by Tk 0.50 to Tk 1 per kg over the past week due to higher transportation costs following the fuel price hike, he said.

Rice prices usually rise around this time as stored rice ages and fresh harvests take time to reach markets. New rice would take at least another two months to become available, he added.

Sohrab Hossain, manager of Janata Rice Agency at Karwan Bazar, said traders had taken advantage of higher transportation costs to raise prices after a prolonged period of stability.

However, there was no shortage of rice in any district, he said.

Zahidur Rahman, 55, an employee of a private courier service, said his income was no longer enough to support his family of six, including four children.

"The money I take to the kitchen market is no longer enough to buy everything we need. I have to drop some items from the shopping list or reduce the quantities to cope with the crisis," said the Hatirpool resident.

Rice prices usually rise around this time as stored rice ages and fresh harvests take time to reach markets. New rice would take at least another two months to become available.

He travels to Karwan Bazar despite having a market near his home, saving at least Tk 100 on purchases worth around Tk 1,200.

His family consumes at least 65kg of rice a month, meaning even a Tk 1 increase per kg adds Tk 65 to his monthly expenses.

Moslim Uddin, a stationery trader, said recent increases in packaged and liquid milk prices had further strained household budgets.

ESSAY

The case for reading, however it begins

NAYER SULTANA

The modern book has become strangely overqualified for a job that once involved only pages. You could keep a book face-down beside the bed, stain a page with tea, or lose the dust jacket and nobody expected it to explain the person who owned it. But now the book has become more industrious. It travels under an arm with its title facing outward, gathers coloured tabs like tiny flags of emotional damage, and waits patiently while a phone negotiates with the morning light. *The Bell Jar (*Heinemann, 1963) is especially good at this. Nothing says emotional stability quite like Plath beside iced latte sweating more than its reader. A book can suggest seriousness, curiosity, melancholy, or simple, very good taste in cover design, all without opening its mouth. Somewhere along the way, carrying a book stopped being merely practical and became part of how a reader enters a room.

The internet naturally gave the habit a name; "performative reading." It sounds rather grand for an activity usually involving bad posture and a bookmark. Goodreads turned leisure into number and annual targets, creating the deeply relaxing experience of falling behind on reading for pleasure. Then came Bookstagram, the book loving corner of Instagram where reviews began sharing space with carefully arranged shelves, attractive covers and the occasional strategically placed cup of coffee. BookTok grew inside TikTok and was less interested in keeping still. Books moved through short videos, emotional reactions, recommendations and trends, sometimes sending years old novels back onto bestseller lists.

Reese Witherspoon, the Oscar-winning actor and producer, built a media company around women's stories, and sisterhood turned out to have excellent market value. Hello Sunshine, the women-centered company she founded in 2016, houses Reese's Book Club alongside its film and television business. In 2021, a majority stake was sold to what became Candle Media, backed by investment giant Blackstone. So the cheerful little book-club sticker sits inside a fairly serious business. In her 2024 study, "Reese Witherspoon's Popular Feminism: Adaptation and Authorship in *Big Little Lies,*" Sarah Louise Smyth argues that this kind of "popular feminism" gives women's stories plenty of visibility while also fitting rather comfortably inside branding, selling and entertainment. The feminist message may be sincere, capitalism has simply learned the vocabulary. Hello Sunshine reportedly considers more than a thousand books, scripts and other pieces of intellectual property a year, and its 2021 deal valued the company at roughly USD 900 million, a figure some Hollywood executives questioned. Money may not buy a Reese's Book Club slot directly, but larger advances, stronger publisher backing and better industry access can make sure some books begin the journey considerably closer to Reese's desk than others.

That uneven road into Reese's orbit is where Marx begins to feel less like an unexpected guest and more like someone who arrived early. Commodity fetishism fits rather neatly into a world where a small tag on a book can carry the weight of celebrity taste, publisher backing, marketing budgets and the possibility of a screen adaptation. None of that makes the book less literary, of course. Reese has helped selected titles travel farther and become harder to ignore, and that matters. The book rains a book. It has simply acquired a marketing department. Still, once recommendation starts flirting with retail power, bestseller status and Hollywood, "Reese's Pieces" begins to sound less like a candy joke and more like a publishing strategy.

South Asian books have found a glossier route into public conversation. Canadian comedian and Media personality Lilly Singh launched Lilly's Library to spotlight South Asian writers, while Indian author and former Bollywood actor Twinkle Khanna curates books through Tweak India, her digital media platform for women in partnership with Crossword, one of India's major bookstore chains. A famous recommendation can carry a novel far beyond the shelf where it began. Celebrities benefit too, of course; fame rarely agrees to sit quietly in the corner. But the reach can also make room for writers who might otherwise wait much longer to be noticed. The old tastemakers had review pages. The newer ones sometimes have millions of followers and excellent hair.

February has been doing that work for decades. Ekushey Boi Mela is reading mixed with adda, wandering, and buying one book too many before pretending the bad is not heavy. There are photographs too.

British Albanian pop star Dua Lips makes celebrity book culture a little harder to dismiss. Her Service95 Book Club, part of her wider cultural platform, launched in 2023 with Douglas Stuart's Booker Prize winning debut novel, *Shuggie Bain* (Grove Press, 2020). Lipa did more than post the cover; she later interviewed Stuart at Hay Festival in Wales, and regularly speaks with other writers about their work. Compared with Reese Witherspoon's more commercially connected book-to-screen world and Twinkle Khanna's broader lifestyle platform, Lipa stays unusually close to the reading itself. Service95 is still a brand; global pop stars rarely misplace those. But here the book seems to get more room than the machinery around it. At least the book still gets invited to the meeting.

American singer and flute player Lizzo takes the idea of performative reading almost charmingly literally. Her first children's picture book, *Lil Lizzo Meets Sasha B Flootin'* (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2026), grows from her own history with the flute; she has played since childhood, and Sasha Flute is the name of her real instrument. The book even includes a QR code reader to an original flute composition. Story time had suddenly acquired a soundtrack. If books now have to compete for a child's attention, Lizzo has chosen the least subtle strategy available. She brought a flute.

Bangladesh hardly needed the internet to teach books how to leave the house. February has been doing that work for decades. Ekushey Boi Mela is reading mixed with adda, wandering, and buying one book too many before pretending the bad is not heavy. There are photographs too. A 2024 report noted visitors lifting books from stalls for a quick picture and returning them is a remarkably brief literary relationship, but a relationship nonetheless. Yet, the fair is larger than the joke. Mosharraf Karim, one of the country's most familiar actors, has spoken about carrying books to outdoor shoots and making time to read between work. Dhaka Lit Fest had already shown how happily literature could live among crowds—conversations spilling beyond stages, while newly bought books disappeared into bags. Here, reading has rarely been a sealed-room habit. Books come outside. They acquire company.



ILLUSTRATION: **MAISHA SYEDA**

Jhumpa Lahiri once said in an interview, "But reading is fundamental. A book is a life jacket." The cover cannot tell us why someone reached for it or what stayed with them after the page was closed. Books are slightly indiscreet that way. They reveal just enough to invite imagination and then refuse to explain the rest. That is where performative reading becomes most interesting. A book can be held where everyone can see it and still contain something meant for one reader alone. The pose may last a minute; the sentence may stay for years. Somewhere between being seen with a book and being quietly altered by it, someone still turns the page.

There is something particularly strange about calling reading performative at a time when educators are already trying to persuade students to read anything that does not arrive as a slide, a summary, or a conveniently highlighted PDF. A student finally walks into class carrying a novel and somehow the cultural response is to wonder whether the novel is there for decoration. Even if it began that way, so what? Habits sometimes arrive through embarrassingly shallow doors. Someone may first pick up a book for reasons that would deeply disappoint the literary police, a beautiful cover, a trend, a recommendation. A few chapters in, we can assume that the cover has already done its job and the story has taken over. Soon enough, the accessory has opinions about their life. A book posed neatly for a photograph may be mocked, shared, saved, searched for, and eventually read. If that is performance, it is at least performance with excellent side effects.

The best answer to all this anxiety happened to be lying on an office desk. *Once, A Little Life* (Doubleday, 2015) by Hanya Yanagihara was lying face-up on my boss's desk. The title was visible, which, according to current internet logic, already puts the book dangerously close to having an agenda. Instead, it produced one question; "Do you like what you're reading?" She said, "Yes, absolutely." "This book beautifully traumatised me," came the reply. My boss answered, "We love a good trauma book." That was the entire scandal. A book cover created a conversation. It gave two people a small point of recognition that had existed 30 seconds earlier. Perhaps "know thyself" is unnecessarily ambitious; knowing the title on the desk did perfectly well. Books have always done this. They sit in rooms, on desks, under arms, and quietly offer strangers or colleagues a reason to speak. If that now counts as performative reading, the performance seems almost disappointingly wholesome.

What worries me more is the embarrassment we are beginning to attach to being seen with books at all. There is another small comedy here. Calling someone a "performative reader" can become its own performance of taste, a way of announcing that one is sufficiently serious about books to identify who is carrying them incorrectly. One person carries a novel everyone seems to be reading; another decides that being seen with it must be the whole point. The novel remains impressively uninvolved. Perhaps reading does not need this much purity. Nobody asks whether a beautiful ring is loved for its craftsmanship or because it looks good on the hand. Both can be true without civilisation collapsing. A book can work the same way. It can be beautiful, social, fashionable, deeply loved, half-read, reread, or still waiting patiently on a shelf. Life is untidy in the nicest way, and sometimes admiration begins with the cover and stays for the pages.

Nayer Sultana *connects bridges between poetry and prose. When she's not being her lecturer-self at North South University, she's stitching together a non-fiction memoir that refuses to stay in one genre. Her work wanders through belonging, becoming, and the shifting idea of home.*



ILLUSTRATION: **MAISHA SYEDA**

POETRY

The last load of laundry

RANIA FATEMA TUI

If I pass away today,
please let me finish the laundry.
Which would be inconvenient,
mostly because I have laundry in the machine.
I know.
Of all the things to worry about—
death,
the afterlife,
who gets my books—
I am thinking about a washing machine.
But there is a load in there
that has been sitting too long,
and I cannot bear the thought
of my clothes becoming
someone else's problem.
So let me rinse the last shirt.
Let me hang everything in the sun.
Let me turn pockets inside out
and discover the usual evidence
of my life:
a receipt,
two coins,
a hair tie,
some ridiculous little thing
I was sure I would need.
Let me fold your shirt, too.
The one I kept stealing
because it smelled like you.
Let me leave the house
looking like I was only
temporarily interrupted.
The bed was made.
The cup in the sink.
The laundry folded.
Nothing dramatic
except the fact
that I won't be coming back for it.
Maybe that is the cruelest thing
about laundry—
how ordinary it is.
How the body leaves
but its smell doesn't.
For a little while,
my clothes will still know me.
My pillow will still remember my hair.
A sweater will still hold
the shape of my shoulders.
And one day,
you will find one of them
at the bottom of a drawer.
You will hold it to your face
without meaning to.
And there I will be—
not quite a person anymore,
just a little soap,
skin,
perfume,
and memory
caught in the fabric.
And you will wonder:
When am I supposed to wash this away?
Please don't make yourself
find the right answer.
There isn't one.
I don't want you
measuring grief
in laundry cycles.
Wash it tomorrow.
Or don't.
Let it smell like me
until it doesn't.
I don't want you standing
over a washing machine,
grieving and wondering
if enough time has passed
to put me on a normal cycle.
There is no appropriate time
to wash someone's scent away.
Do it when keeping it
starts to hurt more
than losing it.
And when you finally press
that little button,
I hope you don't think
you are washing me away.
You're only washing a shirt.
I'm not in there anymore.
And, eventually,
neither is my smell.
That is the part
I want you to survive.

Rania Fatema Tui *is a writer and master of making simple tasks complicated. Powered by iced coffee and last-minute panic, she spends 10% of her time typing, 90% staring at a blank screen, and re-reading text messages five times before sending them.*

DHAKA SATURDAY OCTOBER 17, 2026, KARTIK 1, 1433 BS

SPORT



Emmanuel Sunday played a key role as title contenders Mohammedan SC moved to the joint top of the Bangladesh Football League standings after securing their third straight win with a 2-0 victory over PWD SC in Manikganj yesterday.

Read full story on The Daily Star's website

Flaw in the flat-track code

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI



Spin has contributed to Bangladesh's gains in the Test circuit, but its impact on flatter surfaces has left a lot to be desired.

Bangladesh's love affair with spin took shape during the 2015-2018 period, when spinners not only claimed plenty of wickets but also contributed to notable wins, particularly at home against England and Australia. The trend was reflected in the National Cricket League, where Abdur Razzak, Nayeem Hasan, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam and Hasan Murad have featured among the top wicket-takers across several seasons.

Pace, however, has gained prominence at home and away in recent years. With batting performances weighing Bangladesh down in major multinational white-ball events, the Tigers have also sought to move away from low, slow, spin-friendly tracks. Yet spin remains a go-to weapon for subcontinental sides, particularly on docile or flat surfaces, where Bangladesh's spinners have often lagged behind.

Since Mushtaq Ahmed became spin coach, Bangladesh's Test spinners have taken 177 wickets in 20 matches over two-and-a-half years, compared with 151 in the preceding period. Their average has improved from 32.41 to 28.77 and their strike rate from 68 to 55.8, despite Shakib Al Hasan's absence since the 2024 Kanpur Test. The 14 five-wicket hauls under Mushtaq, double the previous period's seven, further attest to the improvement.

Spin has also supported pace, but flat tracks pose a different challenge when spinners must do the heavy lifting.

The Chennai Test against India in September 2024 offers a case in point. In overcast conditions, Hasan Mahmud and fellow fast bowlers reduced India to 144 for five, but once conditions stopped favouring pace, Mehidy took just one wicket for 77 as Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja added 199. Shakib, nursing an injury, conceded 50 in eight wicketless overs. Bangladesh's two key spinners combined to average 103 across the Test, while Ashwin and Jadeja accounted for nine of Bangladesh's 10 second-innings dismissals, Ashwin taking a six-for.

Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium has long been a spin paradise. Yet, when South Africa's Kagiso Rabada and Co. took control of the October 2024 Test, Bangladesh had picked only one seamer, Hasan Mahmud, making spin central to their plans. Taijul claimed a first-innings five-for, taking five for 122 in 36 overs, but he, Miraz and Nayeem managed only 10 wickets between them in the match. Their average of 33.4 in the first innings fell short of the expectations from the team management.

The following Test in Chattogram saw Rabada and spinner Keshav Maharaj combine to dismantle Bangladesh with pace and spin. South Africa needed to bat only once, declaring at 575 for six, while Miraz and Taijul -- who claimed another five-for -- averaged 73.8 per wicket.

The problem persisted in Colombo in June 2025. Sri Lanka's spinners averaged 17.14 across two innings, while Bangladesh's Taijul, Miraz and Naim averaged 36.6 in their only bowling innings as Sri Lanka made 458 and won by an innings and 78 runs. Similar struggles have surfaced on unsuitable surfaces, including West Indies all-rounder Kyle Mayers' onslaught in Chattogram in 2021.

Mushtaq believes flat pitches test a spinner's technique, a view he has conveyed during spin camps involving bowlers from the HP and Game Development programmes. Under his tutelage, Rishad Hossain became one of the leading wicket-takers at the 2024 T20 World Cup in the USA, where the slow, dull drop-in pitches tested bowlers. Rishad's recent progress, however, has stalled as white-ball surfaces have become more batting-friendly.

Team management sources say Mushtaq's contribution extends beyond spin to "improving team environment, communication and working with mentality of the individual and the group". The BCB also assesses players' mentality in difficult situations and statistical improvement when evaluating a coach.

Flat wickets remain a challenge for Taijul and Miraz, despite each having taken more than 200 Test wickets. Helping them extract more from such surfaces could define Mushtaq's legacy.

There have been occasional bright spots. Against Pakistan in Mirpur this year, Bangladesh's spinners delivered despite little turn for much of the Test. Replicating that performance could help turn missed opportunities into victories, as the drawn Abu Dhabi Test against Afghanistan -- which the Tigers could have won had their spinners risen to the occasion – illustrated of late.

New captain, bigger challenge

SPORTS REPORTER

Litton Das took over as Bangladesh's ODI captain at the end of July, but his first test as skipper since replacing Mehidy Hasan Miraz comes almost three months later, with the tri-series involving Zimbabwe and Afghanistan beginning today.

Bangladesh are set to face Zimbabwe in the opening match of a tournament that will test not only Litton's leadership but also his side's ability to handle the pressure of a multi-nation event.

Bangladesh had won four consecutive ODI series, including a home series against Australia, before losing away to Zimbabwe in July. Yet the results alone did not determine the captaincy decision, as Litton was handed the reins despite Miraz's success. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) appeared to place greater emphasis on how the team achieved the results, with the 2027 ODI World Cup in sight.

A captain's individual performance can also influence how a team is perceived, and this was one area that worked against Miraz during his tenure. Litton, meanwhile, struck a fifty and a century in this month's one-off Test against Afghanistan in the UAE, bouncing back from a lean patch that included three ducks in the Tests against Australia in August and September and another in the Asian Games in Japan.

Litton also has experience of leading the ODI side, notably when Bangladesh beat India 2-1 in a home series in 2022. Overall, he has won three and lost three of his seven matches as stand-in captain, with one abandoned.

He also made a strong impression as T20I captain, with his tactical acumen, field placements, bowling changes and ability to read the game earning him the ODI captaincy. That tactical nous will be crucial if Bangladesh are to take the next step at ICC World Cup events.

The tri-series also brings into focus Litton and his side's biggest assignment ahead: the 2027 ODI World Cup in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. The Bangladesh teams at the 2019 and 2023 editions had potential but ultimately failed to change the country's fortunes on the global stage. Ahead of the 2023 tournament, a captaincy change unsettled the side and was followed by a disappointing campaign in India. This time, Litton has a year to prepare his team mentally and physically before the World Cup begins in October 2027.

Bangladesh will have the Asia Cup in June next year, which will offer a measure of their progress ahead of the World Cup. Focus will also be on the ODI series in South Africa later this year, giving the Tigers an opportunity to assess conditions well in advance.

Meanwhile, after today's match, Bangladesh will face Afghanistan on Wednesday in the tri-series, with the final scheduled for Friday. Litton will hope to make a positive start to his ODI captaincy and establish the clarity and confidence his side will need for the major assignments ahead.





PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Barca face Betis test; City aim to stay perfect

STAR SPORTS DESK

Barcelona face their toughest LaLiga test tonight against third-placed Real Betis at La Cartuja, seeking to extend their flawless start ahead of a daunting fixture run.

Hansi Flick's side boast 10 wins from 10 across all competitions, netting 43 goals. They lead the league with 24 points from eight games. Betis, meanwhile, sit on 19 points, five behind Barca and one ahead of Real Madrid.

Lamine Yamal, 19, remains central to Barca's attack with eight goals and nine assists in 10 games, recently providing two assists in Wednesday's 4-1 Champions League win at Galatasaray to earn player-of-the-match. Yet Barcelona's depth has also been key; Gabriel Jesus has stepped in seamlessly for Raphinha, supported by a versatile midfield.

Manuel Pellegrini's Betis pose a serious threat. Fresh off a 3-2 Champions League victory over Porto and a 5-2 league win over Osasuna, they have five wins and a draw in their last six, with their only league loss coming against Levante in August.

History favors the Catalans, who beat Betis twice last season, including a 5-3 away win, and remain unbeaten away in this fixture since January 2011. Raphinha and Frenkie de Jong return to training and could feature off the bench before Barca faces PSG and the October 25 Clasico against Real Madrid.

In the Premier League, leaders Manchester City look to ignore off-field uncertainty and extend their perfect start hosting Ipswich Town tonight. Meanwhile, struggling Liverpool (two wins in six) visit fourth-placed Brentford. Chelsea travel to Everton eyeing the top four, while bottom-dwelling Fulham -- winless in six -- host Hull City, as manager Alvaro Arbeloa aims to ease some pressure. Finally, Newcastle and Aston Villa meet for a high-voltage clash at St. James' Park.

WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS

Bangladesh Football League
Abahani vs Chattogram City
Live from 2:45 pm

UAE ODI Tri-Series
Bangladesh vs Zimbabwe
1st ODI
Live from 5:30 pm

LaLiga
Valencia vs Athletic Club
Live from 1:00 am (Sunday)

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1/ HD2

Premier League
Everton vs Chelsea
Live from 5:30 pm
Man City vs Ipswich
Live from 8:00 pm
Brentford vs Liverpool
Live from 8:00 pm
Newcastle vs Aston Villa
Live from 10:30 pm



Cisse the lone Italian bright spot

Italian football endured a miserable week in Europe, with all four Serie A clubs suffering defeats in the Champions League. But amid the gloom, teenager Alphadjo Cisse offered a rare moment of cheer with a historic individual milestone in the Europa League yesterday. The 19-year-old became the youngest Italian to score a hattrick in European club competition, inspiring AC Milan to a thumping 4-0 victory over Austrian hosts RB Salzburg. His treble was also the first by a Milan player in a continental fixture since Filippo Inzaghi achieved the feat 24 years ago. Cisse struck all three goals within the first 49 minutes, rewarding coach Ruben Amorim's faith in him as Milan bounced back from an opening-round home defeat to Benfica, despite finishing the match with 10 men.

PHOTO: AFP

Challenge accepted as Fortis eye opening-day upset

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football League side Fortis FC are eyeing an opening-day upset when they face Kuwaiti heavyweights Al Qadsia SC in their AFC Challenge League Group C debut at the Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium today.

The match kicks off at 5:30pm (Bangladesh Time).

After reaching the group stage of Asia's third-tier club tournament with a 1-0 preliminary win over Kyrgyzstan's Muras United, Fortis, last season's third-place finishers in the BFL, are aiming big, eyeing a place in the knockouts – a feat achieved by only Abahani during the 2019 AFC Cup. Fortis, who are in the West region, will have to battle it out to advance either as group winners or as the best runners-up among the three groups in the region.

To acclimate to the sweltering heat, the squad arrived in Kuwait on Tuesday and completed three training sessions. They face a daunting task against Al Qadsia, currently second in the Kuwaiti top flight and boasting talents from Morocco, Egypt, Oman, and Ivory Coast.

Despite the hosts being firm favorites on paper, Fortis head coach Masud Parvez Kaiser is targeting a victory.

"The first two matches are crucial if we want to progress to the quarterfinals," Kaiser told The Daily Star from Kuwait. "We are playing for all three points. Leaving empty-handed will make the remaining matches very difficult."

Kaiser, who is mulling fielding all nine foreign players, added: "Al-Qadsia are a good opponent, but they are not unbeatable. Our players are convinced they can secure the points if we minimise our own mistakes and capitalise on our chances."



While the weather is a hurdle, Kaiser believes it won't severely impact his side, expecting temperatures to drop drastically by the 8:30 pm local kick-off. He is also banking on a lively atmosphere, noting that Bangladeshi expats have shown immense interest in backing Fortis from the stands.





Dengue turns deadlier in October

90 deaths, 28,820 hospitalisations in just 16 days



HELEMUL ALAM

At least 90 dengue patients died and 28,820 were hospitalised in the first 16 days of October, raising concerns over the worsening outbreak.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, dengue claimed 148 lives in September, 43 in August, 36 in July, 13 in June and one in May. Hospitalisations stood at 43,774 in September, 20,536 in August, 9,206 in July, 20,907 in June and 714 in May.

Health experts blamed delayed hospitalisation, inadequate early diagnosis, the absence of an effective three-tier dengue management system and rising infections for the increasing death toll.

A recent death review by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, led by its Director Prof Quazi Ahmed Zaki, found that more than one-third of the 119 patients reviewed died within a day of hospital admission.

The review found that 62.5 percent died from dengue shock syndrome, 31.2 percent from expanded dengue syndrome and

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2



A father holds his dengue-stricken child close as the little one sleeps on his chest at Mugda Medical College Hospital in the capital. At least four dengue patients died while 1,181 others were hospitalised in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday. PHOTO: **MEHEDI HASAN**



PM urges families to join dengue fight

Asks each household to spend 30-60 minutes cleaning twice a week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid rising dengue cases and deaths, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has urged every family to spend at least half an hour to an hour twice a week cleaning their homes and surroundings to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds.

"Let each of us, every family, spend at least half an hour to an hour twice a week cleaning the places in and around our homes where dengue mosquitoes may breed," he said in a video message shared on the verified Facebook page of the Prime Minister's Office.

The PM called for collective efforts to combat

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

VOTER LIST ROW

Delhi cops detain CJP founder from home

Neha Bora picked up near Jantar Mantar

AGENCIES

Police detained India's 'cockroach' movement founder Abhijeet Dipke and some supporters yesterday, ahead of a protest called by him in capital Delhi's central business district, the latest rally to demand the resignation of India's election chief.

This is the second detention in a week for Dipke. He was earlier detained right after his plane landed in Delhi from Mumbai for a protest against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over allegations of voter-list manipulation during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

All India Students' Association (AISA) President Neha Bora, 29 was also detained near Jantar Mantar. A post made on Bora's X

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2

Now rice adds to consumers' woes

Prices rise by Tk 1-2 per kg amid soaring living costs



An increase of Tk 1 or Tk 2 per kg may not seem significant, but we fear further hikes as we are already struggling to manage our daily expenses.

Momotaz Begum
Resident of Tejkuni Para

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

With prices of essential commodities already soaring, a fresh rise in rice prices has added to the woes of poor and lower-middle-income families struggling to make ends meet.

Rice prices have increased by Tk 1 to Tk 2 per kg over the past week, putting further pressure on household budgets strained by the rising cost of living.

Visits to six kitchen markets in Mirpur-1, Mirpur-11, Kazipara, Shewrapara, Ibrahimpur and Karwan Bazar over the past two days found that rice prices had risen by Tk 1 to Tk 1.50 per kg.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

The papaya paradox

Price plunge brings relief to consumers but losses to growers



SHAHEEN MOLLAH

While most vegetables remain expensive in Dhaka's kitchen markets, green papaya prices have plunged to just Tk 4-10 per kg at the wholesale level, bringing relief to consumers but leaving farmers and traders facing heavy losses.

The sharp fall, driven by increased cultivation and a bumper harvest, has persisted for the past week.

Visits to Mirpur-1, Ibrahimur Market in Mirpur-14, Shewrapara, Kazipara and Karwan Bazar

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Protesters chant slogans during a flag rally organised by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), demanding the resignation of India's Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, amid a security presence in New Delhi, India, yesterday. PHOTO: **REUTERS**

INTERVIEW

While Bangladesh women's football has brought the country considerable success and international recognition, girls in some parts of the country continue to face intimidation and discrimination for playing the sport. Recently, pressure and threats from fundamentalist groups forced the cancellation of a women's friendly football match in Derai, a town in Sunamganj district in northeastern Bangladesh, depriving young players of the chance to compete after months of preparation. **Shabana Akter**, *a Grade 10 student and captain of Swapnachura Club, spoke to* **The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman** *about the players' distress, the restrictions they face at home, and their demand for protection and support from the authorities.*

'Why stop us when govt supports women athletes?'

ANISUR RAHMAN

The Daily Star (DS): How did you feel when you heard that the match had been cancelled?

Shabana Akter (SA): We were getting changed into our kits and preparing to go onto the pitch when we heard that the match had been called off. Many of us became very upset and started crying. One player even fainted. We had been preparing for this match with so much excitement for the past two months.

DS: How did you try to comfort your teammates?

SA: We have around 40 to 50 players in our squad, but only 11 can play at a time. I tried to encourage some players, saying, "Look, we won't give up. We have no reason to back down. We will keep trying and moving forward."

Many of the girls already face restrictions at home. Their families sometimes scold them for playing football. After the religious teachers spoke against girls playing football, some girls were even threatened with being thrown out of their homes. Not every family is understanding, so everyone was worried about what might happen next.

DS: As captain, were you scared too?

SA: Yes, all of us were very nervous. But I felt that if I panicked, the other girls would lose hope too. So, I tried not to show my fear and urged them to keep playing and stand up for ourselves.

People said many hurtful things about us for going out to play football. The government is providing recognition and opportunities for women athletes, so why should anyone stop us from playing? If we face these kinds of obstacles, how will girls move forward in sports?

DS: Have you faced similar problems since you started playing football?

SA: Yes. I have been playing sports for ten years, and my family used to say many things to me about it. But they do not say those things anymore because they have come to trust me. I told them, "Look, I want to achieve something big. Encourage me. Playing sports is not a bad thing."

DS: Do you earn anything from these exhibition matches?

SA: No, we do not earn any money from them. We have to collect money from our relatives to organise the matches. There are no ticket sales or other income. In the haor region, girls do not get many chances to play sports. We arrange these matches to keep the girls interested and encourage more of them to play and dream big.

I have also played matches outside the region, including in North Bengal. Sometimes I received a little money, but much of it went towards travel costs. We play purely to fulfil our dreams.

DS: How did you first get into football?

SA: I was in Grade 4 when I first



played football in the Bangamata Primary School Football Tournament. Our coach, Rakib sir, saw me playing and asked if I wanted to continue. We used to play with older girls, but our families often put up obstacles and made us afraid to play.

Many players from our region have gone on to play in the Women's Football League in Dhaka and for the Army and Ansar. But when girls grow a little older, marriage proposals start coming, and their families often marry them off.

DS: What would you like the local

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WR
WEEKEND READ
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The Daily Star







PHOTO: **PRABIR DAS, MEHEDI HASAN**

DURGA PUJA
The joy of coming home

White clouds drift across the blue autumn sky. Shiuli flowers spread their sweet fragrance, while kash sways gently in the breeze. Along with these familiar signs of autumn come the rhythmic beats of the dhak, the sound of shankha (conch shells) and the recitation of Chandi Path.









DIPAN NANDY *and* **ARAFAT RAHAMAN**

Sharadiya Durga Puja is here again.

Across Dhaka, temples and puja mandaps are dressed in festive colours, ready to welcome devotees. Families gather, friends reunite, and children accompany their parents to see the goddess. Devotees bow before the idols, offer anjali and receive prasad.

Beyond the prayers and rituals, these few days bring something people look forward to throughout the year: the joy of being together, renewing old bonds and sharing moments with loved ones.

For the artisans who make the idols, however, the festival begins much earlier, long before the first beats of the dhak announce the goddess's arrival.

At Dhakeshwari National Temple, artisan Sukumar Pal has once again crafted the idols beside the mandap. He began work about a month and a half ago. The main work is complete, with the final painting and decorations now under way.

According to the organisers, it is Sukumar's hands that give shape to the idols at the temple grounds every year.

The work demands patience, precision and a deep understanding of the craft. Bamboo and wooden frames are bound with straw to form the figures. Layers of clay are then applied and left to dry before the surfaces are smoothed, painted and adorned with ornaments.

Slowly, the goddess and her family take shape.

The expressions on their faces, the carefully drawn eyes, the positions of their hands and the intricate designs of their clothing all bear the mark of the artisan's skill. What visitors eventually see at a mandap is the result of weeks of labour, years of experience and a craft passed down through generations.

Behind the goddess's arrival lies a story that has been told and retold for centuries.

At the heart of Durga Puja is the triumph of good over evil. According to the Puranas, when the gods were overwhelmed by the tyranny of Mahishasura, Durga emerged from their combined powers. After a long battle, she slew the demon, a story narrated in detail in the Devi Mahatmya, part of the Markandeya Purana.

Her ten arms, the weapons she carries and the lion she rides symbolise strength and courage in the face of injustice and evil. She also represents women's power.

For devotees, the arrival of Dashabhuja carries both religious significance and the affection of welcoming someone dearly loved. It is this sense of closeness that makes the festival more than a series of rituals.

The anticipation begins with Mahalaya, which marks the start of Devi Paksha, a time to remember ancestors and prepare for the goddess's arrival.

At dawn, devotees observe the occasion with Chandi Path, tarpan and special prayers. For many Bangalees, Mahalaya is inseparable from Mahishasuramardini, recited by Birendra Krishna Bhadra on Akashvani Kolkata.

His familiar recitation, "Ya devi sarva-bhuteshu bhranti rupena samstitha; Namastasye namastasye namastasye namo namaha" (To the Goddess who dwells in all living beings in the form of delusion, we bow to her again and again), has accompanied the occasion for generations, becoming part of the memories of countless Bangalee families.

The main rituals begin on Maha Shashthi with bodhon, amantran and adhivas, through which the goddess is formally welcomed.

Saptami is marked by Nabapatrika Puja, while Maha Ashtami brings anjali and Sandhi Puja. Special worship takes place on Maha Navami.

Each day has its own significance, leading to Bijoya Dashami, when the idols are immersed and the celebrations come to an end. The joy of welcoming the goddess is accompanied by the knowledge that, within days, it will be time to bid her farewell.

Traditional beliefs about the goddess's arrival and departure add another dimension to the festival.

Different almanacs sometimes offer varying accounts of her mode of transport, each associated with the weather, harvests and signs of good or ill fortune.

According to this year's almanac, Durga has arrived on horseback, traditionally associated with political unrest and disorder.

Her departure will be by boat, which is believed to signify better harvests and rising water levels, including the possibility of heavy rainfall or floods. These interpretations belong to religious and cultural traditions rather than scientific forecasts.

While the rituals follow traditions observed for generations, the celebrations take on a different character from one part of Dhaka to another.

From Dhakeshwari National Temple to Shankharibazar and Tantibazar in Old Dhaka, each area has its own way of welcoming the goddess. Some mandaps are known for their longstanding traditions, others for elaborate lighting and decorations, while some draw visitors with the craftsmanship of their idols.

At Dhakeshwari, preparations extend well beyond making the idols. Organisers have completed arrangements for decorating the mandap, managing visitors and distributing prasad.

Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad and the Mahanagar Sarbajanin Puja Committee are jointly organising the celebrations at the temple grounds. This year's theme is "Environment-friendly Durga Puja".

The celebrations at Dhakeshwari are part of a festival observed across Bangladesh, bringing together devotees in cities, towns and villages.

According to Basudeb Dhar, president of Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad, Durga Puja is being held at 33,851 temples and mandaps nationwide this year, compared with 33,355 last year, an increase of 496.

In Dhaka metropolitan area, however, the number has fallen slightly. According to the latest figures provided by the organisers, 258 temples and mandaps are hosting the festival this year, compared with 261 last year.

But numbers tell only part of the story of Durga Puja.

In Shankharibazar and Tantibazar, the narrow streets and old neighbourhoods carry memories of celebrations stretching back generations. The puja is woven into the lives of these communities, where religious traditions have long been closely tied to the bonds among neighbours and families.

Elsewhere in the capital, from Ramakrishna Mission to Ramna Kali Temple and mandaps in residential neighbourhoods, local residents come together to organise the celebrations.

The arrangements may differ, but the familiar activities remain: visiting the idols, offering prayers, attending cultural programmes and sharing prasad.

For many, Durga Puja is also an opportunity to meet people they rarely get to see during the rest of the year.

Old friends find time for one another, neighbours exchange greetings, and families take their children from one mandap to another. Some come to pray, others to admire the idols or spend an evening with loved ones.

People of other faiths also visit the mandaps and take part in the celebrations, creating opportunities for neighbours and friends from different communities to share in the occasion.

Amid the prayers, gatherings and festivities, there is also an awareness that the celebrations will soon draw to a close.

On Bijoya Dashami, the idols will be immersed, the lights at the mandaps will go out, and the familiar beats of the dhak will gradually fade. The city will return to its usual bustle. Families will head home, friends will part, and another year's celebrations will be over.

Yet there is something comforting in this familiar farewell. The autumn sky, the fragrance of shiuli, the flowers offered during anjali and the sound of the dhak will remain in people's memories, along with the moments spent with those they love.

And as the goddess departs, devotees will carry the familiar hope of welcoming her again next autumn.

"Aaschhe Bochhor Abar Hobe, Uma asben ghore."



Can Bangladesh bring its HILSA BACK?

Workers sort hilsa at Chattogram's New Fishery Ghat on October 7, 2026, ahead of a 22-day nationwide fishing ban. While seasonal bans are important for conservation, addressing changes in hilsa migration patterns requires a broader approach to fisheries management. PHOTO: **RAJIB RAIHAN**

M.A. MAZID

The hilsa (Tenualosa ilisha), known locally as ilish, is Bangladesh's national fish and an integral part of the country's culture, heritage and food security. Bangladesh has long dominated global hilsa production, contributing about 75 per cent of the total catch, with most of the remaining 25 per cent shared between India and Myanmar. Within Bangladesh, the fishery accounts for approximately 11 per cent of national fish production and 1 per cent of the country's GDP.

The fishery also directly supports about one million fishers working in riverine and marine waters, while indirectly sustaining another five million people engaged in processing, transport, net-making and trade, making it an important source of employment and livelihoods across the country.

MIGRATION OVERVIEW

As an anadromous species, the hilsa spends most of its adult life in the Bay of Bengal. During the peak breeding season, mainly the autumn months of September and October, the fish migrate in large shoals into freshwater rivers, chiefly the Padma and Meghna, to spawn and complete this important stage of their reproductive cycle.

However, research indicates that the hilsa's spawning migration is being seriously disrupted. Hilsa production in Bangladesh fell from 5.71 lakh tonnes in 2022–23 to 5.00 lakh tonnes in 2024–25, a decline of about 12 per cent, despite the government's continuing efforts to manage and protect the fishery. This suggests that biological management measures alone, such as the seasonal fishing bans enforced by the Department of Fisheries since 2005–06, are no longer sufficient to address the emerging challenges. Climate change, severe environmental degradation and changes in river morphology are altering the species' historical migration routes, potentially diverting shoals towards deeper offshore waters and into the waters of neighbouring countries.

SHIFTING MIGRATION PATTERNS

Historically, hilsa migrated up to 1,200 kilometres inland through the Padma, Jamuna and Meghna river systems. Major inland spawning grounds were distributed across districts such as Chandpur, Laxmipur, Barishal, Bhola, Patuakhali and Shariatpur. Today, such long-distance inland migrations are becoming increasingly rare, and the fish appear to be changing their traditional routes in several important ways:

SHIFTING ROUTE COMPARISON

● **Westward diversion (India):** Catch data from 2015–2024 show increased hilsa availability in West Bengal's Hooghly River, alongside a declining catch per unit effort (CPUE) in the upper Padma. Tagging and estuarine studies point to a possible diversion through western marine and estuarine channels into Indian waters, suggesting changes in the distribution and movement of migrating shoals.

● **Eastward diversion (Myanmar):** Marine surveys indicate higher hilsa densities along Myanmar's Ayeyarwady coastal zone, suggesting a possible reorientation of migrating shoals towards the eastern Bay of Bengal and changes in their traditional patterns of movement.

● **Deep-sea retention:** Genomic and behavioural research at Bangladesh Agricultural University indicates that hilsa can adapt their behaviour to changing environmental conditions. When exposed to stressful conditions at river mouths, large adults are increasingly completing their life cycle further out at sea or in coastal estuaries, rather than undertaking their traditional long-distance migrations inland.

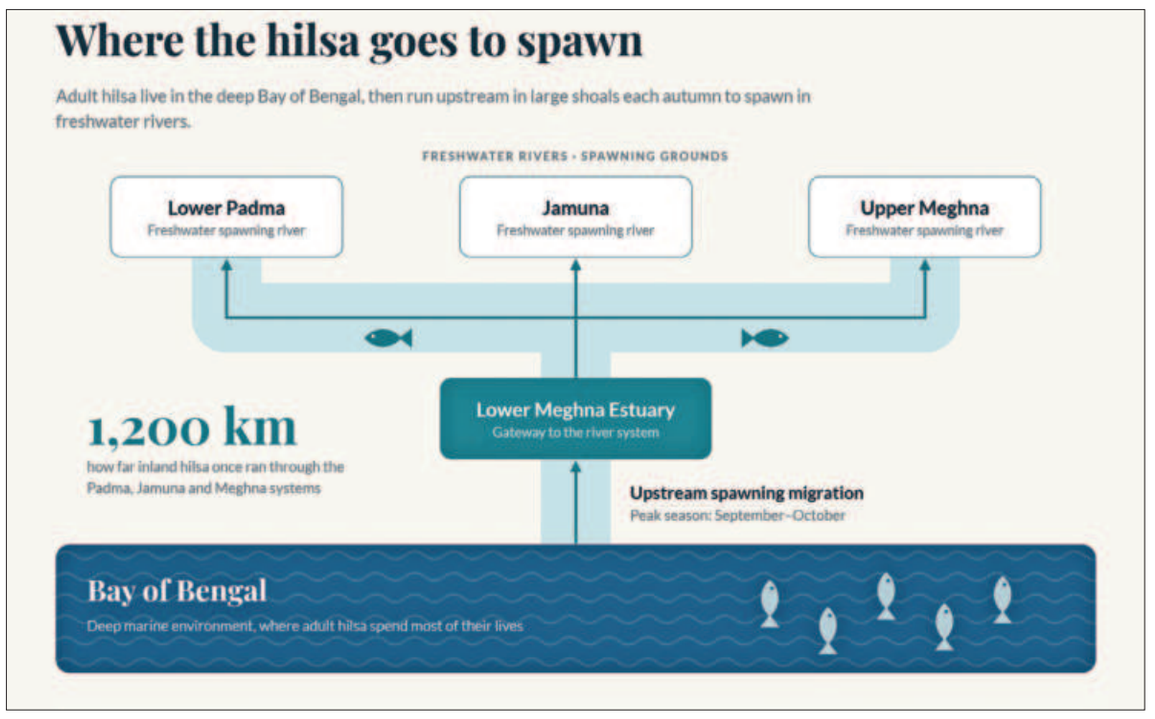


Diagram 1: Migration overview

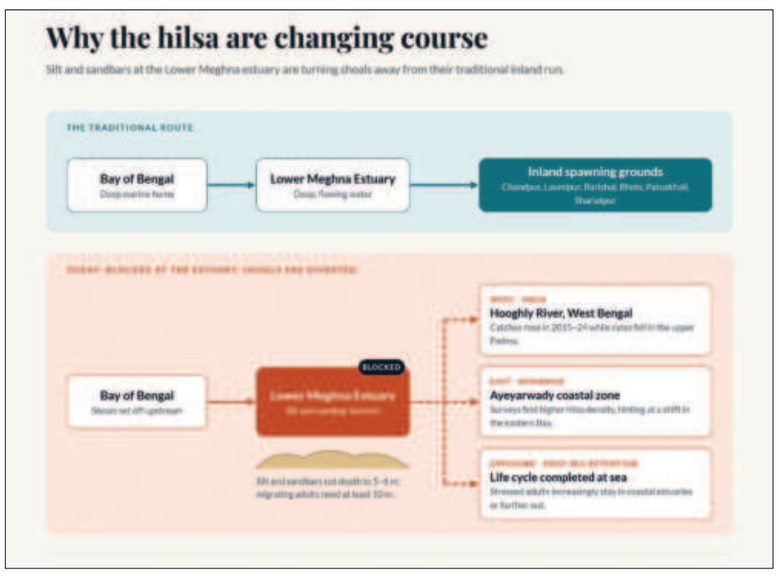


Diagram 2: Shifting route comparison

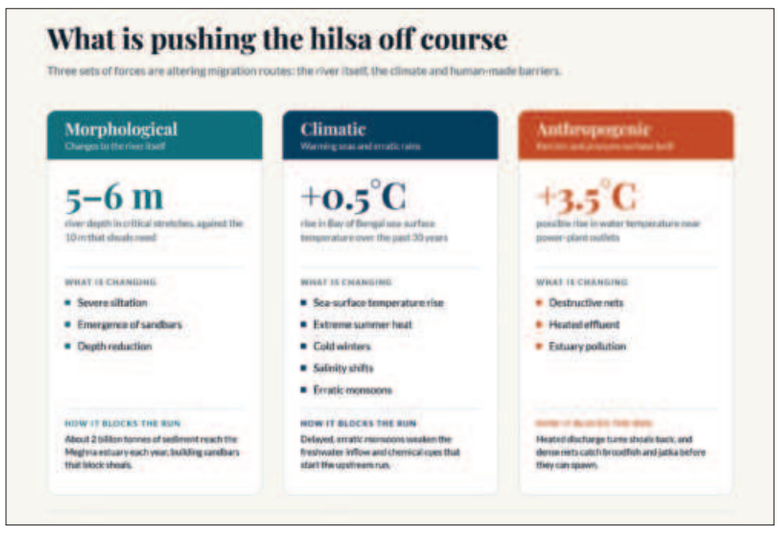


Diagram 3: Key drivers of migration shift

KEY DRIVERS OF SHIFTING MIGRATION

Four major factors are altering hilsa migration routes: changes in river morphology, climate change and hydrological shifts, thermal and industrial barriers, and overexploitation at estuarine entrances. Together, these pressures are affecting the environmental conditions and migration corridors that hilsa depend on throughout their life cycle.

KEY DRIVERS OF MIGRATION SHIFT

1. Severe siltation and morphological changes

Migrating adult hilsa need flowing water at least 10 metres deep, with strong currents, to navigate upstream successfully. Yet about two billion tonnes of sediment are carried downstream through the river systems each year, with substantial deposits accumulating in the Meghna estuary. Heavy siltation has reduced river depths to just 5–6 metres in critical stretches, creating submerged sandbars and other physical obstructions that can block or disrupt the movement of migrating shoals.

2. Climate change and hydrological shifts

Over the past 30 years, sea surface temperatures (SST) in the Bay of Bengal have risen by roughly 0.5°C, shifting salinity fronts and altering the distribution of marine habitats. Alongside extreme summer heatwaves and cold winters, delayed or erratic monsoon rains disrupt freshwater inflows and the chemical cues that hilsa need to begin their upstream migration. These changing hydrological conditions can further complicate the fish's ability to locate and reach suitable spawning grounds.

3. Thermal and industrial barriers

Infrastructure built close to designated sanctuaries, notably thermal power plants in Patuakhali, Barguna and Barishal, including the Payra, Patuakhali and Barishal plants, has introduced additional sources of thermal, acoustic and chemical stress into nearby aquatic environments. Heated wastewater discharged from these plants can raise water temperatures near the outlets by up to 3.5°C. Because hilsa are highly sensitive to temperature changes, these thermal barriers can potentially turn migrating shoals back towards the open sea, disrupting their traditional upstream migration routes.

4. Overexploitation at estuarine entrances

Dense networks of destructive fishing gear, such as monofilament gillnets (current jal) and estuarine set bag nets (behundi jal), form virtual walls across river mouths, including areas such as the Tetulia estuary. Adult broodfish are caught before they can reach freshwater sanctuaries and spawning grounds, while the indiscriminate catching of jatka (juvenile hilsa) severely limits the stock's ability to replenish itself and maintain healthy populations over successive breeding seasons.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The declining hilsa catch and shifting migration routes have immediate social and economic consequences for Bangladesh, particularly for fishing communities whose livelihoods depend directly or indirectly on the availability of hilsa in rivers, estuaries and coastal waters.

HILSA SANCTUARIES AND SPAWNING GROUNDS

To counter overexploitation and protect hilsa at critical stages of their life cycle, Bangladesh has established six official hilsa sanctuaries, alongside four major marine spawning grounds. These protected areas are intended to safeguard important habitats, support successful reproduction and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the country's hilsa fishery.

SANCTUARIES MAP

OFFICIAL SANCTUARIES

1. Sanctuary 1 (Chandpur–Laxmipur): A 100 km stretch of the lower Meghna River, extending from Shatnol (Chandpur) to Char Alexander (Laxmipur).

2. Sanctuary 2 (Bhola–Shahbazpur River): A 90 km stretch of the Shahbazpur River, one of the major distributaries of the Meghna.

3. Sanctuary 3 (Bhola–Tetulia River): A 100 km stretch along the Tetulia River, extending from Bheduria (Bhola) downstream to Char Rustam.

4. Sanctuary 4 (Patuakhali–Andharmanik River): A 40 km stretch of the Andharmanik River estuary in Kalapara Upazila, which serves as an important feeding ground for juvenile hilsa.

5. Sanctuary 5 (Shariatpur/Chandpur–Padma River): A 20 km stretch of the lower Padma River, extending from Naria to Tarabunia.

6. Sanctuary 6 (Barishal–Meghna tributaries): Productive river channels along the tributaries of the Meghna around Hizla and Mehendiganj.

MARINE SPAWNING GROUNDS

Four offshore spawning areas complement these sanctuaries: Dhalerchar (Char Fasson, Bhola), Monpura Island (Bhola), Moulavichar (Hatiya, Noakhali) and Kalirchar (Sandwip, Chattogram). These areas provide important habitats for hilsa reproduction and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the fishery.

TRANSBOUNDARY ISSUES AND GOVERNANCE

Because Tenualosa ilisha is a shared fish stock across the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME), no single country acting alone can fully protect the species throughout its migration routes and life cycle. Hilsa conservation can no longer be managed solely as a domestic issue. Effective protection requires harmonised transboundary governance involving Bangladesh, India and Myanmar.

● **Farakka Barrage and freshwater inflow:** Reduced dry-season flows from the Ganges weaken currents entering the Padma, potentially accelerating siltation and weakening the chemical cues that hilsa need for successful upstream migration.

● **Asymmetrical fishing bans:** Bangladesh enforces a strict, scientifically monitored 22-day broodfish fishing ban and months-long jatka protection periods, but India and Myanmar impose their bans on different dates. Consequently, fish protected in Bangladeshi waters can still be caught after crossing maritime boundaries into neighbouring countries' waters.

● **Geographical indication (GI) and migration shifts:** As hilsa shoals shift towards neighbouring waters, questions arise over the management and sharing of regional catches and how Bangladesh can maintain the economic and commercial benefits associated with its geographical indication recognition for hilsa.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Seasonal fishing bans alone cannot reverse the shift in hilsa migration patterns. Addressing the problem also requires ecosystem-based management, targeted capital dredging, stronger environmental protection measures and coordinated regional diplomacy to ensure the long-term sustainability of the fishery.

INTEGRATED HILSA RECOVERY STRATEGY

1. Targeted capital dredging of migration corridors

Prioritise regular, high-precision dredging at critical estuarine choke points, particularly the lower Meghna confluence and the outer channels of Hatiya and Bhola, to restore the minimum 10-metre water depth and maintain the current velocity that migrating hilsa shoals need to navigate inland successfully.

2. Harmonisation of transboundary fishing bans

Establish a joint management taskforce under the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO) to synchronise the 22-day autumn spawning ban and other marine protection periods across Bangladesh, India and Myanmar, ensuring more consistent protection of migrating hilsa stocks across national boundaries.

3. Environmental standards for industrial development

Enforce strict thermal discharge regulations and environmental impact assessments for power plants and industrial facilities located near hilsa sanctuaries, including those at Payra, Barguna and Barishal, to ensure that any increase in local water temperature remains below levels that could cause physiological stress to migrating hilsa.

4. Enhancing fishers' livelihood security

Expand alternative income-generating (AIG) programmes and ensure that Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) assistance reaches fishers on time during seasonal fishing bans. Improving access to affordable credit would reduce fishers' dependence on exploitative dadon lending and encourage greater compliance with conservation laws, while supporting the financial security of fishing households.

5. Advanced transboundary research and monitoring

Expand joint research between the Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute (BFRI) and international counterparts, such as India's Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI), using otolith microchemistry, satellite oceanography and acoustic tagging to track shifting hilsa migration routes in real time and improve the scientific evidence available for regional fisheries management.

Dr M.A. Mazid *is a former director general of the Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute and a recipient of the Ekushey Padak.*

EL NIÑO AND HEAT INEQUALITY

The politics of staying cool in a warming Bangladesh

ADIL MOHAMMED KHAN

As climate change accelerates, extreme heatwaves are no longer rare seasonal events; they have become a harsh, everyday reality across Bangladesh. While rising global temperatures affect the entire country, the physical, economic and social impacts of extreme heat are not shared equally. Heat inequality in Bangladesh occurs where poverty, poor spatial planning and policy failures intersect. This creates a dangerous situation in which the country's most vulnerable populations pay the heaviest price in terms of their health, social lives and livelihoods.

Urban areas in Bangladesh are now experiencing an unprecedented intensity of heatwaves, triggering a level of severe thermal distress never experienced before. In a densely populated megacity like Dhaka, which is home to around 2 crore people and has a population density of about 50,000 people per square kilometre, extreme heat severely disrupts everyday life. In wealthy, well-planned residential neighbourhoods like Gulshan, indoor temperatures can be easily managed with air conditioning. However, just one kilometre away, in the Korail slum, an informal settlement home to low-income families, houses are built with thin corrugated iron roofs and uninsulated walls. As a result, low-income residents experience the extreme summer heat in a completely different and much harsher way than their wealthy neighbours. This stark contrast highlights the reality of heat inequality among city dwellers, which directly affects public health and lowers the overall quality of life across urban areas in Bangladesh.



A rickshaw puller splashes water on his face near Tikatuli intersection after working in the sun. For daily-wage earners, resting during peak heat hours means an immediate loss of income.
PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



A schoolgirl uses a portable fan while travelling to school by rickshaw near Holy Cross Girls' High School. Although rising temperatures affect the entire country, the physical, economic and social impacts of extreme heat are not shared equally.
PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

CURRENT CONTEXT OF EXTREME HEAT

Due to the compounding impacts of climate change and rapid urbanisation, urban temperatures across Bangladesh are steadily rising. This extreme heat situation has been further exacerbated this year by the El Niño phenomenon. The presence of El Niño, which significantly alters global and regional climate systems and can suppress monsoon rainfall, acts as a major risk multiplier for extreme thermal stress.

When an El Niño event develops and influences South Asia, it does not merely cause a uniform spike in regional temperatures; it also exposes and intensifies deep spatial and socioeconomic heat inequalities within the rapidly growing cities of Bangladesh, such as Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Rajshahi, Cumilla and Mymensingh.

DYNAMICS OF HEAT INEQUALITIES IN BANGLADESH

In rapidly urbanising hubs like Dhaka, Chattogram and Khulna, the loss of green spaces and natural water bodies has severely intensified the urban heat island effect. However, this temperature increase is not felt equally across city wards. High-density, low-income neighbourhoods and informal settlements are overwhelmingly concentrated in areas with high levels of urban development and minimal green or open spaces. Homes in these settlements are largely constructed with corrugated iron sheets or thin asbestos roofing, which trap heat. Indoor temperatures in these informal settlements can soar significantly higher than those in nearby affluent residential zones like Gulshan or Baridhara, turning homes into literal ovens with little or no possibility of cross-ventilation.

OCCUPATIONAL AND ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY DUE TO HEAT

For millions of daily-wage earners, seeking shelter from dangerous heat on a summer day is an unaffordable luxury. Rickshaw pullers, street vendors, construction labourers and agricultural workers face prolonged, direct exposure to solar radiation and extreme heat, thereby increasing their risk of heatstroke and other health hazards. Choosing to rest during peak heat hours results in an immediate loss of daily wages. Studies show that street vendors and informal labourers can lose up to half of their daily earnings during days of extreme heat, simply due to reduced working capacity and heat exhaustion. Meanwhile, millions of ready-made garment and other industrial workers operate under intensive indoor conditions, where factory floors often reach oppressive temperatures, compounding occupational health hazards.

MACROECONOMIC TOLL OF URBAN HEAT

Dhaka loses $6 billion worth of labour productivity each year due to heat stress caused by extreme temperatures. This amounts to up to 8 per cent of the annual labour output in Dhaka, according to a study by the Adrienne Arsht-Rockefeller Foundation Resilience Center, a joint initiative of the Rockefeller Foundation and philanthropist Adrienne Arsht (The Daily Star, 2 October 2022). The study compared 12 cities across the globe and found that heat impairs labour productivity in Dhaka more than in any other city. Unless measures are taken to reduce global warming, the loss will rise to 10 per cent by 2050, according to the study. Despite not having the highest absolute temperatures globally, Dhaka exhibits a disproportionately high sensitivity to heat stress due to two systemic factors:

- **Labour-intensive economy:** A vast proportion of the city's workforce is concentrated in physically demanding, labour-intensive sectors (such as garment manufacturing, construction and informal transport) that require physical labour in environments without climate control.
- **Low rate of active cooling:** There is a critical deficit in cooling infrastructure. The majority of workspaces, industrial units and low-income residential areas lack access to affordable air conditioning or mechanised ventilation, trapping heat and accelerating physical fatigue.

CONTRASTING HEAT CONDITIONS IN URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS

In informal settlements and low-income areas like Korail or Kamrangirchar in Dhaka, housing mostly consists of crowded, poorly ventilated structures made from corrugated iron sheets. Research on indoor heat shows that these metal sheets absorb and trap heat, driving indoor temperatures 3 to 5 degrees Celsius higher than the outdoor temperature. In contrast, wealthy residential areas feature concrete buildings with thick walls that help block heat, built-in shading and air conditioning.

THE LOSS OF BLUE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

High-income neighbourhoods are often able to preserve pockets of greenery, trees, parks and open spaces between buildings. On the other hand, unplanned, high-density urban areas have over 70 to 80 per cent of their land covered by concrete and buildings. These areas largely lack the natural cooling effects provided by urban trees, wetlands and open water bodies, which normally help lower temperatures through evaporation and evapotranspiration.

ENERGY DISPARITIES IN BANGLADESH

When extreme heat strikes, the national power grid often struggles to generate sufficient electricity because of fuel shortages and technical problems. However, the resulting power cuts are not distributed equally across the country. Rural areas bear a disproportionate share of these power cuts, revealing a major disparity in how electricity is distributed between urban and rural areas in Bangladesh.

URBAN-RURAL ENERGY DISPARITY

The biggest difference in electricity supply during a heatwave is between the capital city and the rest of the country. Power authorities have historically prioritised ensuring that Dhaka and other major cities maintain their electricity supply. They do this to protect government offices and major businesses, as well as to prevent political unrest. As a result, major cities usually receive most of the electricity they need, facing only short power cuts caused by local line faults.

In wealthy, well-planned residential neighbourhoods like Gulshan, indoor temperatures can be easily managed with air conditioning. However, just one kilometre away, in the Korail slum, an informal settlement home to low-income families, houses are built with thin corrugated iron roofs and uninsulated walls. As a result, low-income residents experience the extreme summer heat in a completely different and much harsher way than their wealthy neighbours.

Rural and semi-urban areas suffer the most from electricity shortages. The Rural Electrification Board (REB) provides electricity to over 75 per cent of the country's population, but during severe heatwaves, it receives 25 to 40 per cent less electricity than it actually needs. While someone in Dhaka might complain about a 30-minute power cut, families in villages have to endure 6 to 12 hours, and sometimes up to 15 hours, without electricity in extreme heat.

INTRA-CITY ENERGY DISPARITY

Even within major cities like Dhaka or Chattogram, electricity is not distributed equally among different neighbourhoods. Wealthy neighbourhoods, such as Gulshan, Banani and Dhanmondi, and commercial zones have better electricity infrastructure and rarely face planned power cuts. Moreover, expensive apartment buildings and corporate offices have large automatic generators or advanced battery backup systems (IPS). These systems ensure an uninterrupted electricity supply, allowing residents and office workers to remain comfortable.

Working-class areas and informal settlements (slums) are often connected to lower-priority electricity lines that experience frequent power cuts. When the electricity goes out in these areas, residents are trapped inside cramped homes with poor ventilation, increasing the risk of heatstroke and dehydration.

This inequality led to a major protest in mid-April 2026, when residents of Dhaka's Korail slum blocked a main road after going 48 hours without electricity. Angered by the prolonged power cut during a severe energy crisis, the protesters stopped traffic to demand the restoration of their electricity supply. Residents expressed deep frustration over the unequal distribution of electricity. Furthermore, informal settlements often rely on temporary or illegal electricity connections, making them particularly vulnerable to prolonged power cuts during the hot summer months.

SOCIOECONOMIC COSTS OF HEAT INEQUALITY

While wealthier citizens use air conditioning for comfort and luxury, rural and low-income populations suffer the physiological consequences of extreme heat because of the lack of electricity in their households. This contributes to a rise in heat exhaustion, heatstroke and dehydration, predominantly affecting vulnerable groups such as children, older people and outdoor day labourers. Frequent power cuts also disrupt critical rural activities, such as mechanised agricultural irrigation systems during peak crop-growing seasons. They also disrupt small cottage industries and other local economic activities.

Adaptation to extreme heat depends heavily on socioeconomic resources. While affluent segments of society protect themselves through facilities and infrastructure, such as energy-efficient air conditioning, better-quality housing and immediate access to healthcare, the urban poor remain largely excluded from these resources.

Furthermore, the use of air conditioners by wealthy urban residents imposes a heavy burden on poorer communities. Extensive use of private air conditioning releases waste heat into streets and surrounding areas, raising local outdoor temperatures and severely affecting middle- and lower-income populations.

AC USE: WIDENING POWER DISPARITIES

The surge in air conditioner (AC) usage among affluent households during heatwaves creates a form of "dual inequality". As there are no restrictions on the purchase of ACs in our country, excessive use of air conditioning by affluent households externalises both the thermal and financial costs onto ordinary people. When thousands of AC units operate simultaneously in upscale residential and commercial areas, they release massive amounts of heat into the surrounding environment, potentially increasing local temperatures by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius.

During peak heatwave days, space cooling can account for 40 to over 50 per cent of a city's total electricity demand. The grid becomes heavily overloaded in an effort to keep high-income areas artificially cool. Consequently, low-income citizens may be deprived of even a basic ceiling fan, often their only affordable defence against heat, while substantial amounts of electricity are consumed by high-wattage cooling systems elsewhere. A single 1.5-tonne air conditioner (AC) can consume as much electricity as 20 marginalised households using ceiling fans in low-income settlements.

The government's directive requiring all air conditioners in public, private and residential spaces to be set at a minimum temperature of 25°C or higher remains legally in force, but its implementation presents a completely different picture.

The directive reflects an attempt to curb cooling demand during the summer months. However, the policy faces severe structural and behavioural challenges in enforcement, making it largely symbolic for much of the population.

SOLUTIONS TO HEAT INEQUALITY

Designing and implementing Heat Action Plans (HAPs) for cities across Bangladesh is essential. Nature-based solutions and passive cooling strategies can also play an important role in addressing heat inequality.

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS AND PASSIVE COOLING MEASURES

- **Targeted urban green expansion:** Undertake large-scale, planned tree-planting initiatives, prioritising native, shade-providing species along major roads and within densely populated residential wards.
- **Blue-green infrastructure:** Enforce strict protection and restoration of existing urban wetlands, canals (khals) and flood flow zones. Open water bodies can significantly lower local temperatures through evaporative cooling.
- **Cool roof initiatives:** Promote or subsidise the application of reflective white cooling paint or the development of rooftop gardens, particularly in informal settlements where corrugated iron-sheet roofs act as thermal traps.

Spatial planning and green building codes

Formulating spatial plans for cities and regions and implementing green building codes could go a long way towards combating heatwaves in Bangladesh.

- **Ventilation corridors:** Regulate building layouts and the configuration of land subdivisions to preserve natural wind corridors, ensuring that air can circulate through densely populated urban areas.
- **Climate-responsive building materials:** Amend local building codes to discourage the inappropriate use of materials with high thermal mass in areas particularly vulnerable to extreme heat, while encouraging passive cooling designs, such as shaded façades, cross-ventilation and cavity walls.
- **Decentralised growth:** Reduce excessive population and development pressure on major cities by developing climate-resilient secondary cities, supported by strict land-use zoning that mandates a minimum of 20–25 per cent green space and 10–15 per cent water bodies.
- **Urban hydration networks:** Install high-capacity drinking water stations at major transport hubs, busy intersections and industrial areas, such as the ready-made garment (RMG) industrial zones in Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayanganj.
- **Adjusted working hours:** Institutionalise a "right to shade and rest" during peak heat hours, generally from 12 pm to 3 pm, for outdoor workers, including construction workers, while shifting working hours to early mornings or late evenings where feasible.

WAY FORWARD

Heat inequality in Bangladesh reveals that climate vulnerability is deeply institutionalised. The systemic practice of deprioritising rural electricity networks to maintain urban comfort reflects an ongoing challenge of spatial injustice, where a community's or region's socioeconomic status influences its electricity supply. The poor suffer the most during heatwaves, yet there remains a critical absence of effective government policies and actions to ensure equitable access to electricity. It is high time for the government to address heat inequality across all socioeconomic sections of society to ensure fairness, equity and justice for everyone. Furthermore, balanced spatial planning measures, such as integrating blue-green infrastructure, mandating sustainable building materials and implementing nature-based solutions, can significantly reduce the impacts of extreme heatwaves. Urban authorities must prepare and implement locally tailored Heat Action Plans for their respective areas. Ultimately, true climate resilience requires an immediate shift towards greater energy equity, ensuring electricity justice for every citizen, regardless of geographical location or income level.

Professor Dr Adil Mohammed Khan *is Executive Director of the Institute for Planning and Development (IPD) and Professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Jahangirnagar University. He is a former President of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Commonwealth Association of Planners. He can be contacted at adilmdkhan@gmail.com and adilmk@juniv.edu.*





***Left*, a mulberry tree laden with berries, whose leaves silkworms feed on for 25 to 30 days before spinning yellow or white cocoons. Silk filaments are extracted from the cocoons to produce yarn and fabric. *Right*, silkworm cocoons on display at the Bangladesh Sericulture Development Board.**

PHOTOS: **AZAHAR UDDIN**

Silk City tangled in Chinese yarn

Chinese yarn dominates the market, squeezing local producers, driving farmers away from sericulture and leaving Rajshahi's centuries-old silk industry fighting for survival

SHOHANUR RAHMAN RAFI *and* **HUMAIRA MUSTAZIR**

What comes to mind when one hears "Rajshahi"? Its clean streets, famous mangoes and, of course, silk. For generations, visitors have taken home the city's famed fabric, prized for its soft texture, natural sheen and fine craftsmanship.

But behind its appeal lies a struggling industry. Bangladesh produces only a fraction of the silk yarn it needs, while imported yarn, mainly from China, dominates the market. Easier to weave and less costly to process, imported yarn has weakened local production, driven farmers away from sericulture and left the historic industry fighting for survival.

A RICH HERITAGE UNDER PRESSURE

Rajshahi's fertile soil, warm, humid climate and access to water from the Padma River made it ideal for growing mulberry trees and raising silkworms. Its location along historic trade routes also helped local silk reach markets beyond Bengal.

Historical records trace silk production to the 13th century, when the fabric was known as Bengal silk or Ganges silk. Fine textiles from Bengal were traded with China and Central Asia under Hindu and Buddhist dynasties. Production continued during the Islamic sultanate and British periods, when colonial administrators recognised Rajshahi silk's quality and promoted it for export.

Over generations, weavers developed distinctive fabrics and refined their craftsmanship, earning Rajshahi the nickname Silk City.

Modern silk production in the city began in 1952, during the Pakistan period. The state-owned Rajshahi Silk Factory was established in 1961 and began production in 1962, while the Bangladesh Sericulture Development Board was established in 1978, according to board sources. In 2021, Rajshahi silk received geographical indication (GI) status, recognising its distinct identity and heritage.

Silk production involves growing mulberry trees, feeding their leaves to silkworms, extracting filaments from cocoons, preparing and dyeing the yarn, and weaving it into fabric.

Locally known as polu poka, silkworms feed on mulberry leaves for 25 to 30 days before spinning yellow or white cocoons. Workers treat the cocoons with heat or steam and boil them to soften the protein binding the filaments before unwinding the strands into yarn. The yarn is then twisted, cleaned and dyed before being woven into fabric, sometimes decorated with traditional block printing or wax-resist designs.

The fabric is washed, stretched and pressed before being made into sarees, panjabis and other garments priced from around Tk 2,100 to more than Tk 25,000. Making a tie requires more than 250 silkworms, a shirt around 2,500 and a sari about 5,000.

LOCAL PRODUCTION FALLS FAR BEHIND DEMAND

As silkworms depend entirely on mulberry leaves, nurseries are essential to silk production. However, competition from imported yarn has reduced demand for locally produced silk, forcing private nurseries to close and thousands of farmers to switch to other crops. Only 11 government-run mulberry nurseries remain operational nationwide.

"Cash crops, including mangoes, have become more profitable in many areas, prompting many mulberry farmers to switch to other crops or occupations. As a result, areas that once produced large quantities of cocoons now produce little or none," said Md Mahbubul Haque, deputy director of the Regional Sericulture Extension Office in Rangpur.

He said falling cocoon production had left domestic producers able to meet only a small share of the country's silk-yarn demand.

Bangladesh needs around 400 tonnes of silk yarn annually but produces only 41 tonnes locally, including just 1.5 tonnes from the government sector, said Abul Kalam Azad, a former technical officer of Rajshahi Silk Factory who now works at its only remaining display centre. Imports, mainly from China, meet the rest of the demand.

Liakat Ali, president of the Bangladesh Silk Industry Owners' Association, said annual demand had doubled from 200 tonnes in 1991 to around 400 tonnes, while domestic production had failed to keep pace. He said Chinese yarn dominated the market partly because of lower tariffs.

"There is an international conspiracy behind this," said Mahbubul, referring to the duty-free entry of imported yarn in the 1990s.

"When imported yarn entered the country without taxes, rural producers with limited capital were hit hard. Since then, the domestic silk industry has been in this condition. For various reasons, factories began to shut down, while private producers started buying Chinese yarn. As a result, locally produced yarn gradually disappeared. Chinese yarn now dominates the market," he said.

"Since 1991, production using foreign yarn has increased. Before that, imports were limited, and not everyone could import yarn. Now, much larger quantities enter the country through various channels," said Sazzad Ali, managing director of Sopura Silk Mills Ltd.

He said the exact volume of imported yarn was difficult to determine because it entered through different channels, with some imports classified as products subject to lower tariffs.

Sopura's showroom is in Rajshahi's BSCIC industrial area, where several private silk mills operate retail outlets alongside their production units, attracting visitors from outside the city.

Sazzad said demand for foreign-yarn products was higher because the fabric was softer and lighter. His factory imports cocoons and yarn but also produces some fabric using locally produced yarn.

Manufacturers and weavers say Chinese yarn is easier to process, generates less waste and improves production efficiency.

MA Mannan, director (Finance and Planning) of the Bangladesh Sericulture Development Board, said local yarn often broke during weaving, raising production costs.

Md Sanwar Hossain, a weaver at Rajshahi Silk Factory, said Chinese yarn was finer, smoother and more uniform than local yarn, whose quality varied from season to season.

"Chinese yarn is easier to weave, breaks less often and generates less heat. Local yarn requires more care and cleaning during weaving. One local cocoon produces around 500 yards of yarn, compared with around 2,000 yards from a Chinese cocoon," he said.

However, Sanwar said local yarn was more durable and of better quality. It costs around Tk 5,000 per kilogramme, compared with Tk 8,000 for Chinese yarn.

"Although Chinese yarn is more expensive per kilogramme, fabric made from local yarn costs more to produce because it generates more waste and requires additional processing," he said.

STATE-OWNED FACTORY STRUGGLES TO RECOVER

Rajshahi Silk Factory, once a major supplier of the country's silk yarn and fabric, reflects the industry's decline.

At its peak, the factory operated 63 looms and produced around 106,070 metres of fabric annually. Mounting losses and a lack of capital forced it to close in November 2002. It reopened in 2018 but has yet to resume commercial-scale production.

Since reopening, it has produced around 60,000 metres of fabric through June this year. It now operates seven looms, with another eight expected to become operational soon. All its products use locally produced yarn.

Staff shortages and outdated designs remain major obstacles. The board had 581 approved posts when the factory was fully operational, but only 139 people now work across the board and its facilities.

Mannan said the factory remained operational to encourage local silk production but had yet to return to its former commercial scale.

"The vacant posts at the factory need to be filled. Staff shortages mean we cannot update our designs, which remain old-fashioned. As a result, many people prefer fabrics made from Chinese yarn to those made from local yarn," he said.

Azad said some factory-produced yarn was used to make fabric for its only remaining display centre, while the rest was reserved or sold to private institutions. The centre recorded sales of around Tk 50 lakh in the last financial year. The factory once had showrooms in several divisional cities.

Factory supervisor Ashraful Islam Tutul said its fabric used only local yarn, unlike products from private manufacturers, which relied mainly on imported or mixed yarn.

BUYERS STRUGGLE TO IDENTIFY LOCAL SILK

Consumers often cannot distinguish genuine Rajshahi silk from products made with imported yarn, Tutul said.

Saidur Rahman, manager of Sopura Silk Mills Ltd, said buyers often could not identify the yarn used, particularly when different types were mixed.

"Almost everything in the market is now made with Chinese yarn, while local yarn is rarely used. Customers mainly want a good-quality garment, and we try to provide that," he said.

Regular silk buyer Tasnia Hosne Afrin said comfort guided her choices.

"I cannot tell whether a product is made from local or foreign yarn. I buy whichever feels more comfortable," she said.

For local producers, heritage alone is difficult to sell when buyers prioritise comfort and appearance.

RURAL LIVELIHOODS AND REVIVAL EFFORTS

The decline threatens rural jobs and incomes. Mannan said sericulture could support rural livelihoods, particularly for women, who account for 70 to 80 percent of silk workers.

The Sericulture Board provides subsidies, mulberry saplings and silkworm eggs free to farmers in sericulture areas. Farmers raise the silkworms for 25 days before selling the cocoons to the board.

According to Mannan, 100 silkworm eggs can yield 50 to 60kg of cocoons in 25 days. At Tk 400 to Tk 500 per kilogramme, four production cycles a year could generate an annual income of around Tk 1 lakh.

"We want domestic production to increase. We will provide whatever support is needed from the board," he said.

Cooperation with China is also part of efforts to modernise the industry. On August 18 this year, Bangladesh and China held a joint conference on strategic cooperation in silk research and development, focusing on research, technological innovation, skills development and bilateral cooperation.

Rajshahi silk's challenge is to preserve its centuries-old tradition, restore local yarn production, bring farmers back to sericulture and make domestic fabric competitive in a market dominated by imports.









***Clockwise from top left*, workers wash silk fabric to remove impurities at Rajshahi Silk Factory; golden silk yarn hangs to dry; workers reel silk threads onto a large machine; and finished white and golden silk yarn is displayed at the Bangladesh Sericulture Development Board.**





