DHAKA THURSDAY OCTOBER 22, 2026



"Not even a tiny bit of enriched nuclear material will leave Iran. Such materials constitute a major asset for the Iranian people."

Iran's security chief **MOHSEN REZAEI**

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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Ctg building itself into climate danger

ADB report shows construction in port city growing fastest in flood-prone zones

Flood-zone development grew 16.2% in 2016-25; 9.7% on safer land

1.75cr people could face coastal flooding annually by 2100

Households already spend 17.25% of income on flood protection

KEERO ADHNAN AHMED

Nearly a quarter of Chattogram's built-up area lies in places that would go underwater during a severe coastal flood, yet these are the areas where the city is expanding fastest, according to an Asian Development Bank (ADB) study.

The port city's total settlement extent or built-up areas, meaning land covered by buildings, roads and other infrastructure, increased from 66.1 square kilometres in 2016 to 73.5 square kilometres in 2025, the ADB said in its Asia-Pacific Climate Report 2026, released yesterday.

Between 2016 and 2025, flood-prone settlement grew by 16.2 percent, compared with 9.7 percent of built-up areas on safer land, and 11.2 percent across the city as a whole.

Growth was fastest in areas where severe flooding could leave 0.5 to 1.5 metres of water, at 16.6 percent. In areas where floodwaters could exceed 1.5 metres, settlement grew by 16.1 percent.

Floodwater deeper than 0.5 metres can damage buildings and disrupt water supplies, sanitation and electricity, the report said.

"Chittagong stands out as the clearest warning, with growth concentrated in the deepest zones," it said.

The report, which ADB describes as the first assessment of coastal risks across all 30 of its

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Thousands of devotees gather at Patenga beach in the port city yesterday to bid farewell to Goddess Durga on the final day (Dashami) of Durga Puja, the largest religious festival of the country's Hindu community. The immersion of the goddess's idol symbolises Durga's return to her celestial abode.

PHOTO: **RAJIB RAIHAN**

NOWHERE TO PLAY

41 Dhaka wards have no parks or playgrounds; experts warn of growing risks to children's physical, mental health

TAMANNA YESMIN MARIA

One Monday afternoon, 10-year-old Khalid Abdullah (not his real name), a Grade-3 student, gazed sadly at the football lying in the corner of his room. He had returned to his Shewrapara home from school an hour earlier.

He picked up the football his father had bought him months ago and stepped onto the apartment balcony. Looking down at the street below, he saw cars, buses and rickshaws inching through traffic. There was no open field nearby, no children chasing a football and no place where he could join a game.

Sensing his disappointment, his mother handed him a mobile phone so he could play video games instead.

The recent Detailed Area Plan (DAP) of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (RAJUK) shows that of the 129 wards in the city, at least 41 -- 10 under Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and 31 under Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) -- do not have any playgrounds or parks.

Khalid's story is far from unique. As neighbourhoods become increasingly crowded, playgrounds vanish and children's schedules fill up with classes and coaching, many in Dhaka city are growing up without a regular place to run and play.

Health experts say the shortage of recreational spaces is affecting more than just children's leisure time -- it is undermining their physical health, mental well-being and their ability to develop social skills.

This is reflected in a 2024 review published in the International

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ROAD SAFETY DAY

Nearly 8,000 children killed in less than 7yrs

At least 2,513 died travelling to or from school

SHAMIMA RITA

As six-year-old Tanvir Islam Arian waited by the roadside to return home after school on April 19, a covered van struck him near Keowa Purba Khondo Government Primary School in Dhaka.

The Grade 2 student was rushed to hospital, but doctors declared him dead on arrival.

Arian never made it home.

For his family, an ordinary school day ended in an unimaginable loss. For thousands of other families across Bangladesh, the tragedy is painfully familiar.

Between January 2020 and September 2026, at least 7,963 children were killed in road crashes across Bangladesh, accounting for nearly 18 percent of the 44,816 fatalities recorded during the period, according to the Road Safety Foundation (RSF).

Of them, 2,513 (31.56 percent) died travelling to or from educational institutions, while another 12 percent were killed playing on roads near their homes. Another 2,812 (35.31 percent)

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Fatalities jump 26% since 2018

SHAMIMA RITA

In the eight years after the student-led road safety movement, road fatalities have increased by 26.2 percent, raising questions about the effectiveness of measures introduced to make roads safer.

68,285 people were killed in 50,936 road crashes between January 2018 and June 2026, according to Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity.

According to Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, 9,111 people were killed in 6,729 road crashes in 2025, compared with 7,221 deaths in 5,514 crashes in 2018. Number of crashes increased by 1,215, or 22 percent, over the eight years.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

Subsidy cut deals blow to theatre troupes

Mahila Samity auditorium rent more than doubles to Tk 11,500 per shift

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

The withdrawal of government subsidies has more than doubled the cost of staging plays at the Dr Nilima Ibrahim Auditorium of the Bangladesh Mahila Samity, putting theatre troupes under financial strain and discouraging performances at the venue.

Since January, troupes have had to pay Tk 11,500 per shift, up from Tk 5,000, after the Ministry of Cultural Affairs discontinued a Tk 6,500 subsidy.

Eminent theatre personality Ramendu Majumdar said the auditorium authorities had initially set the rent at Tk 11,500 when the venue reopened.

"We spoke with the cultural minister at the time and asked, 'How can we afford such

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

'DRUG PARTIES' AT COP'S HOUSE

Under police's nose, for nearly a year

Seizure list raises questions over limited drug recovery

Between 20 and 22 parties were being organised at the property every month since 2025, with participants joining through online registration, according to the DB.

SHAHEEN MOLLAH *and* **TOUSIF KAIUM**

Alleged drug consumption, illegal DJ parties and other antisocial activities at a senior police officer's house in Purbachal went unchecked for nearly a year until a raid early Tuesday, although a six-storey police outpost stood just 30 yards away.

The house stood in a secluded part of the neighbourhood, but the gatherings were hardly discreet.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

Where Dhaka's waste finds new life

RBR

Caramelised peanuts for broken glass, new pots and pans for old clothes, or half-dead electronics -- those were my previews of Dhaka's scrap market. Back then, I didn't see an industry; I only saw the joy of biting into that crunchy bar of nokul dana, the caramelised peanuts that sweetened the deal.

I had no inkling of the modus operandi, no sense of how vast this scrap economy was or how vital it was as a livelihood for the collectors. To me, it was barter wrapped in childhood delight.

I met Masum Miah in Naya Bazar and Babul Mirza in Kaatpoti, right in the heart of Old Dhaka's labyrinth while looking for coloured second-hand glass and old doors.

Particularly those sought-after amber-frosted antique glass with etched



AI-ASSISTED ILLUSTRATION

MY DHAKA

designs; mind you, not the contemporary designs but those finite pieces from history. In Old Dhaka, it lies abandoned, stacked like debris along the roadside.

To find such treasures, you must brave these two areas of the city's historic commercial quarters -- dense and chaotic, still pulsing with their mercantile past. Here, scraps from demolished buildings or discarded household stock are sold as-is; the thrill is in spotting an intact piece among the rubble, a shard of beauty hidden in the piles.

Nothing really goes to waste. You've no idea what sells and what doesn't -- because here, almost everything does. That's what I love about this city.

Take a rickshaw ride or walk through the narrow alleys of Old Town and you'll see this fantastic cycle in motion: glass panes stacked from torn-down offices, doors leaning against shopfronts, bricks piled high, rods bundled for resale. Furniture stripped from old houses sits beside new pieces made to mimic the old. Plastic, paper, metal -- every fragment has a buyer.

I once stumbled upon a vintage but salvaged motorcycle front face, complete with a rubber tire, front forks, handle grips, and an operational headlight, detached from the body and waiting for a new owner. It could be a retro decor piece in my son's man cave.

It felt surreal, almost comic, yet it revealed the remarkable resourcefulness of Dhaka's scrap traders. What truly astonishes me is their ingenuity.

Every discarded broken part of this city is reborn as a trade piece and finds its way back into the cycle, rolling into trade all over again, proving the sheer scale of an industry built entirely on leftovers.

That's Dhaka's genius: an economy stitched together by grit, scraps, and the hands of those who make a living from what others throw away. Here, scavenging isn't metaphor -- it's survival. In Dhaka, the city's waste doesn't vanish -- it's scavenged.

Dhaka's own band of improvised children are the scrap pickers etched forever in our collective memory as Tokai. Ronobi's cartoon figure, whose very name means "one who gathers leftovers," remains as Dhaka's strange souvenir.

Sacks slung over their shoulders, they move through bins, drains, and dump sites, sifting for anything with resale value -- plastic bottles, iron rods, scraps of paper that can be traded at bhangari shops and scrapyards. But what they barter for is not caramelised peanuts, not childhood treats, but survival itself: a brutal living carved out amid sharp cuts, toxic fumes, no security, and no schooling.

Their finds don't end with them. Bought, sorted, and sold, the scraps flow onward -- to larger recycling factories or to small-time dealers like my new friends -- feeding an industry that thrives on what the city discards.

And now that repurposing antiques as a statement of slow lifestyle is trending in Dhaka, scrap finds will take centre stage.

Police impose overnight curfew in parts of Paris

Macron vows no repeat of riots

REUTERS, *Paris*

French President Emmanuel Macron pledged to prevent a repeat of last weekend's riots and looting, as the Yellow Vest movement filed plans for a major Paris march on Saturday that will present the government with its next big test.

Macron said yesterday that those seeking to cause disorder at the next protests would be stopped, while Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu met union leaders in an effort to defuse one of the worst crises France has faced in recent years.

Macron also accused some foreign leaders of spreading misinformation about what had happened. US President Donald Trump in particular has blamed the turbulence on mass migration, saying it was a warning for Americans.



Meanwhile, Paris police announced a new curfew in certain areas of the city from last night to this morning.

France's neighbours Italy and Belgium have also started to experience similar unrest, on a smaller scale. Italy's government has ordered 500 troops to Milan to stem street violence there.

A representative of France's "Gilets Jaunes" (Yellow Vests) movement, a grassroots group not tied to the unions, presented plans for a march across the heart of Paris, including areas that were ransacked just days ago.

Student groups have also called for protests the same day to push demands for greater investment in education. Yellow Vest activists are seeking to revive their campaign, which emerged in 2018, against rising living costs and declining public services.

Last weekend's demonstrations rapidly degenerated into rampant violence, especially in Paris, Marseille, Lyon and Limoges, which the overwhelmed police took hours to contain.

In a letter to unions ahead of yesterday's meeting, French Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu said their talks should focus on ensuring "the indispensable freedom to demonstrate", which he said some were trying to curtail by associating it with "unacceptable acts".

Ctg building itself into climate danger

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coastal developing member countries, draws on satellite records, flood modelling and household surveys.

It tracks settlement growth in five Asia-Pacific coastal cities: Shanghai, Manila, Chattogram, Hai Phong and Nuku'alofa in Tonga.

In Manila, the most exposed areas grew the slowest, while in Hai Phong the fastest growth occurred outside the flood zone.

With much of Chattogram still undeveloped, the report says, planning decisions will substantially determine how exposed the city becomes, and the losses that follow.

Urban planner Delwar Hossain Mazumder, former chairman of the Chattogram centre of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB), said the findings reflected what was happening on the ground.

Safer areas were built up long ago, while port-related businesses and an influx of workers were driving construction onto cheaper, low-lying land that was once covered by water, he said.

"The Chattogram Development Authority (CDA) makes plans and considers its job done, without properly monitoring what is being built where," he said.

With a new master plan nearing completion, he urged the authorities to strengthen the CDA, incorporate independent planners' input and strictly enforce planning rules, allowing "not even a hair's breadth of deviation".

Otherwise, he warned, "the city will quickly become unliveable".

He cited Kolkata, which he said had been heading towards becoming unliveable in the last century before authorities tightened planning controls and expanded the city into a new, planned area.

Asked whether flood risks were considered when approving buildings, CDA Deputy Chief Town Planner Abu Isa Ansari said the authority's plan did not designate any part of Chattogram as flood-prone.

However, he said, the master plan prohibits construction in designated water-retention areas to help tackle waterlogging.

He attributed rapid construction in areas such as Bakalia and Chandgaon, which lie along natural drainage slopes between the city's hills and the river, to the daily influx of people from surrounding upazilas.

"Had satellite towns been built in those upazilas, people would not have come. But Chattogram could not do that," he said.

PORTS, POVERTY AT RISK

Beyond the city's immediate flood threat, nearly all of Bangladesh's ocean-related climate losses could stem from disruption at its ports, including the wider costs to trade, according to ADB research accompanying the report.

Chattogram port handles about 92 percent of the country's import-export trade.

Under a high-emissions scenario, the value at risk could reach about $1.4 billion a year by 2050 and $13.6 billion by 2100, at 2020 prices.

Under the same scenario, around 1.75 crore Bangladeshis could be affected by coastal flooding annually by 2100, the third-highest figure among the 30 countries, after China and India.

Annual damage could reach about 15 percent of 2020 GDP by the end of the century.

Bangladesh also has the region's sharpest overlap of poverty and flood risk, the report said.

The country's poorest coastal communities are concentrated in the most flood-prone areas, leaving those with the greatest need for adaptation least able to afford it.

One study cited in the report found that Bangladeshi households spent 17.25 percent of their annual income on flood protection.

Meanwhile, dry-season groundwater in coastal areas routinely exceeds World Health Organization salinity limits. Saltier drinking water has also been linked to dangerously high blood pressure in pregnant women.

Citing a 2018 World Bank estimate, the report said sea-level rise, water scarcity and agricultural decline could force up to 13.3 million Bangladeshis, about 7.5 percent of the population, to move within the country by 2050.

The report praised the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 as one of the region's most advanced but warned that financing it would be difficult.

The plan envisages $52 billion in investment through 2040, requiring delta-related spending of about 2.5 percent of GDP annually, against existing adaptation spending of around 0.8 percent. Some 99 percent of the funding must come from public sources.

Bangladesh's cyclone shelter network, now numbering around 5,000, was cited as a success. Deaths fell from 1,38,866 in the 1991 cyclone to 111 in a comparable storm in 1997, the report noted.

[Chattogram Staff Correspondent Sifayet Ullah contributed to this report]

Subsidy cut deals blow to theatre troupes

FROM PAGE 1

high rent?'" he said.

Following the discussions, the then cultural ministry agreed to subsidise the rent by Tk 6,500 per shift, reducing the amount payable by theatre troupes to Tk 5,000, he said.

"However, the interim government discontinued the subsidy after taking office. Without the funding, we were left in a difficult position. The rent is simply too high for many theatre groups. The current government has not restored the subsidy either. We want the government to restore it," Majumdar said.

The number of plays staged at the auditorium has since declined significantly, with many theatre troupes reluctant to use the venue because of the high rent, according to artistes and Mahila Samity sources.

Speaking to The Daily Star, theatre activist and Dhaka University sociology professor Dr Samina Luthfa said, "It is almost impossible for theatre troupes to afford such high rent. The government must take action, as Mahila Samity holds a significant place in the country's theatre scene.

"I know that the cultural ministry and representatives of the theatre community are currently in talks, so we can only hope the subsidy will be restored."

A source at Bangladesh Mahila Samity, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that a special rental arrangement for theatre troupes had long been in place with financial assistance from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

The Daily Star has obtained an official letter, dated August 12, 2026, from Mahila Samity General Secretary Tamanna Rahman to Cultural Affairs Minister Nitai Roy Chowdhury.

The letter seeks financial assistance for the 2026-27 fiscal year to support theatre performances at the auditorium.

It says previous government subsidies kept the venue affordable, allowing an average of 20 performances a month.

The organisation has requested Tk 14.3 lakh from the ministry's special fund, calculated at Tk 6,500 per performance for 20 shows a month over 11 months, as the auditorium remains closed for one month each year.

The grant is intended to sustain regular theatrical performances and preserve the venue's legacy.

Contacted, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Ali Newaz Mahmud Khaiyam said the ministry was willing to discuss the issue and take necessary steps to support theatre workers.

"We will definitely look into the matter, as we take the well-being of the theatre sector very seriously. We will address the letter and hope to reach a resolution acceptable to everyone involved," he said.

Nowhere to play

FROM PAGE 1

Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, which said playgrounds support children's physical activity, emotional well-being, social interaction and cognitive development.

The researchers argued that playgrounds should be treated as essential public infrastructure because they help children build confidence, creativity, teamwork and communication skills.

The situation in Dhaka city suggests such considerations receive little priority. The recent Detailed Area Plan (DAP) of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (RAJUK) shows that of the 129 wards in the city, at least 41 -- 10 under Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and 31 under Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) -- do not have any playgrounds or parks.

According to DAP and the latest city corporation data, more than 950 playgrounds and parks are required for around 60 lakh residents in DNCC while the number is around 700 for over 43 lakh residents in DSCC.

While replying to a question from a lawmaker in parliament on July 15, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman said that DNCC oversees 189 parks, playgrounds and open spaces. Of those, 38 are currently free from encroachment and being managed in a planned manner.

Besides, development work has already been completed at 20 parks, four playgrounds, two children's parks and two Eidgah grounds, the PM pointed out.

He also said illegal encroachers had been removed from 256 parks and playgrounds under the jurisdiction of DSCC and other agencies. Development and maintenance work was underway at these facilities.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Parents say they are increasingly concerned about the impact of inadequate recreational spaces on their children's development.

"My kids have no opportunity for outdoor recreation. It's just school, coaching and screen time," said Rehana Begum, a mother of two from Shewrapara.

She said both her children spend too much time on mobile phone or computer screens and too little time with other children.

"By trapping them in these concrete cages, we are making them sick. I feel entirely helpless," she said, adding that her older child had poor eyesight and weak muscles.

Explaining the impact of limited outdoor activity on children, Helal Uddin Ahmed of the National Institute of Mental Health said, "In the absence of safe playgrounds or open spaces, many children have little choice but to spend their free time on digital devices."

Over time, he said, excessive screen use can disrupt sleep, increase irritability and gradually reduce children's social skills and emotional development.

The effects extend to children's physical health as well.

Mahbubul Haque, a professor of neonatal and paediatric medicine at Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute, said many of the children he treats suffer from vitamin D deficiency, obesity and poor physical fitness because they spend so little time outdoors.

"If we want to protect Bangladesh's future, we must protect our children. They need at least an hour every day to play outdoors, mix with other children and spend less time on mobile phones."

WHAT OFFICIALS, EXPERTS SAY

When contacted, Md Ashraful Islam, chief town planner of Rajuk, said DAP has identified 55 government-owned plots for future recreational spaces, and work on two new parks has already begun.

He further said schools are required to keep 60 percent of their premises as open space, but many continue to operate without playgrounds.

Ashraful also acknowledged that many parks have been commercialised, with 20 to 40 percent of their areas covered by concrete despite the 5 percent limit set by the Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC).

"According to the World Health Organization, every person should have at least nine square metres of public open space, but Dhaka has only about 0.6 square metres. We need to protect existing parks, remove commercial structures, create new playgrounds and strengthen enforcement," he said.

Welcoming the government's recent initiatives, experts have called for reclaiming all playgrounds that have been encroached upon or illegally occupied.

They also suggested that the authorities put in place a "field-sharing model" that would allow school playgrounds to remain open for children in the neighbourhood after school hours.

REPTILE AWARENESS DAY

Over 9,000 turtles rescued in six years

Trafficking networks stretch across borders

KHENGSAPRUE MARMA

At least 9,046 turtles have been rescued by the Forest Department's Wildlife Crime Control Unit (WCCU) in six years since 2021, as illegal wildlife trafficking continues despite repeated enforcement drives.

According to WCCU records, 7,685 turtles, nearly 85 percent of the total, were rescued between 2024 and September this year.The figures underscore the threats facing freshwater turtles and tortoises from illegal trade and habitat destruction, as Reptile Awareness Day was observed yesterday.



Rescued turtles being released into a waterbody.

PHOTO: **WILDLIFE CRIME CONTROL UNIT**



The rescued turtles.

The records show that 557 turtles were rescued in 2021, 225 in 2022, 579 in 2023, 1,678 in 2024, 3,220 in 2025, and 2,787 this year till September.

Among the identified species, at least 2,316 Indian roofed turtles and 1,237 Indian flapshell turtles were rescued. Both are classified as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.

Freshwater turtles are essential keystone species that keep rivers, lakes, and wetlands healthy. They cycle nutrients, clean up dead matter, spread plant seeds, and act as biological indicators of water quality.

On September 27, authorities seized 1,163 Indian roofed turtles from the luggage of Malaysia-bound passenger Md Shahidul Islam at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. A case was filed against him under the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2026.

However, rising seizures do not necessarily indicate increased trafficking, as they may also reflect intensified enforcement and improved detection, said officials.

Abdullah AS Sadique, wildlife inspector at the WCCU, said trafficking networks begin with local collectors, often fishermen and marginalised communities, before passing through middlemen to international operators.

Turtles collected from wetlands and other habitats are smuggled to China, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and Myanmar, driven largely by demand for meat and exotic pets, he said.

While carriers are frequently arrested, organisers coordinate transactions through mobile phones and online platforms, sometimes from abroad, he added.

WCCU Director Mohammad Mizanur Rahman called for greater public awareness and stronger inter-agency coordination.

He said four frequently trafficked freshwater turtle species are protected under the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2026.

M Abdul Aziz, professor of zoology at Jahangirnagar University, called for better technology and specialised training for customs officials to combat increasingly sophisticated trafficking networks.



Pedestrians walk along a section of Kazi Nazrul Islam Road in the capital's Lalmatia, dug up for development work implemented by the city corporation. The work has stalled after the initial 15 days, disrupting traffic, causing noise pollution and forcing pedestrians to navigate the damaged stretch on foot. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: **PRABIR DAS**

IN FOCUS

JOURNALIST ALIF MURDER

Court places second arrestee on 3-day remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrokona*

A Netrokona court yesterday placed a youth on a three-day remand in connection with the murder of journalist Lutfuzzaman Fakir Alif in Netrokona's Durgapur upazila.

Netrokona Senior Judicial Magistrate Court-2 Judge Md Alimul Islam granted the remand for three days after police produced Ashiqur Rahman Prangon, 21, seeking a seven-day remand, confirmed Court Inspector Abdul Momin.

A team of Special Response Battalion (SRB-14) arrested Prangon of Durgapur municipality in the Shaheed Minar area on Tuesday night.

Durgapur Police Station OC Khondokar Shaker Ahmed said Prangon is the nephew of a man locally known as "Shooter Shamim", who faces at least 30 cases, including three murder cases, filed with the police station.

Alif was shot dead by unidentified assailants in the Telenjia area of Uttrail Bazar on the Shyamganj-Birishiri road in Durgapur on the night of October 15.

Alif was the Netrokona correspondent of private television channel Ruposhi Bangla. He also operated a Facebook page named "Detective Article", where he published investigative reports on border smuggling, criminal activities and various irregularities.



Star journalist Sohrab Hossain laid to rest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barishal*

Md Sohrab Hossain, The Daily Star's Patuakhali correspondent for more than 22 years and vice-president of the Patuakhali Press Club, was laid to rest at his family graveyard in Auliapur, Patuakhali, yesterday morning.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at 10:00am on the grounds of Auliapur Sabina Akter High School, attended by relatives, colleagues, fellow journalists, and local residents.

His elder son, Atikur Rahman, sought prayers for his father at the janaza. His other son, Sufian Molla, also spoke on the occasion.

Earlier, The Daily Star's Content Editor Md Al-Amin, Patuakhali Press Club President Zakir Hossain, and representatives of different social, political and professional organisations paid their last respects to Sohrab.

Following the janaza, he was buried next to the grave of his elder brother, Maulana Wahab Molla. SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

The uneven road to controlling hypertension

Education, wealth shape disparities in diagnosis and treatment, studies find

TASNEEM TAYEB

Bangladesh is among 14 countries where hypertension diagnosis rates differ by at least 10 percentage points across educational groups, according to a World Health Organization report released on Tuesday.

Using Bangladesh's 2018 STEPS survey, the WHO found that hypertension diagnosis was more common among adults aged 30-69 with secondary or higher education than those with less than primary schooling. The comparison is part of an assessment of 32 countries with education-disaggregated data.

The report, State of inequality: noncommunicable diseases and their risk factors, is the WHO's first global assessment of within-country inequalities in the burden, detection and treatment of major chronic diseases. It draws on nine international datasets and examines 35 indicators.

A Bangladesh study published three days earlier found a substantial education gap even among patients receiving treatment.

Blood pressure was controlled in only 35.8 percent of treated patients without formal schooling, compared with 59.4 percent of those with higher education, according to the paper published on October 17 in the Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health.



- 19.7% with hypertension have their blood pressure under control
- 45.1% of adults with hypertension receive treatment
- Blood pressure is controlled in 59.4% of treated patients with higher education, against 35.8% of those without formal schooling
- 66.3% of patients in the wealthiest 20% of households had been diagnosed, compared with 53.6% in the poorest 20%
- Only 43.6% of treated patients had controlled blood pressure.

The researchers analysed 13,760 adults aged 18 and above from the 2022 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS). They found that patients with higher education had just over twice the odds of achieving blood pressure control.

However, the association does not prove that education itself caused better outcomes.

Hypertension affected 20.7 percent of adults in the analysis. Of those with the condition, 54.8 percent knew they had it, and 45.1 percent were receiving treatment.

Among treated patients, 43.6 percent had controlled blood pressure. As fewer than half of those with hypertension were receiving medication, only 19.7 percent of all adults with the condition had their blood pressure under control.

A separate study published in June, also based on the 2022 BDHS, found that access to diagnosis and treatment varied by wealth.

Among adults with hypertension, 66.3 percent of those from the wealthiest 20 percent of households had been diagnosed, compared with 53.6 percent of those from the poorest 20 percent.

Among those diagnosed, 79.5 percent of the richest group received treatment, against 61.7 percent of the poorest.

Published in PLOS Global Public Health, the study also found that hypertension prevalence was higher among the wealthiest 20 percent of households, at 27.1 percent, than the poorest 20 percent, at 17.3 percent. The poorer group's disadvantage lay in diagnosis and treatment, rather than a higher measured prevalence.

Another analysis of the 2022 BDHS, published in July, found that blood pressure control among people with hypertension improved from 12.5 percent in 2017–18 to 19.3 percent in 2022. Treatment coverage rose from 37.0 percent to 44.6 percent over the same period.

The June, July and October SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

Biman sets Riyadh flight date, resumes Dammam services

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has decided to operate a flight to Riyadh early on October 26 as conditions improve following attacks on Saudi Arabian airports.

The flight is scheduled to depart Dhaka at 1:25am (Bangladesh time), the national flag carrier said in a press release yesterday.

Biman said it would decide on operating additional Riyadh flights after reviewing the overall situation.

Meanwhile, the airline resumed flights to Dammam yesterday, with daily departures from Dhaka scheduled for 8:00am until October 26. The flights will be operated using Boeing 777 aircraft.

Biman flight BG350 departed Dammam for Dhaka yesterday and was still airborne at the time of reporting, according to flight-tracking website Flightradar24.

For Jeddah, Biman will operate two flights from Dhaka today, followed by one daily flight at 7:20pm on October 23, 24, and 25.

Flights to Madinah have been operating as usual since October 18 using Boeing 787 aircraft. The airline said the current schedule would remain unchanged until further notice.

Biman said passengers will be informed of any further changes to flight schedules, and they were advised to contact its sales offices for booking and travel information.

Restrictions at Saudi Arabian airports have affected 134 flights involving Bangladesh, disrupting travel for 20,254 passengers, according to the latest figures from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, flight operations at Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport remain restricted SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

Rajshahi divisional commissioner transferred over 'breach of protocol'

STAR REPORT

Rajshahi Divisional Commissioner Yusuf Ali was transferred to the Public Administration Ministry on Tuesday evening, hours after an apparent "breach of protocol" while greeting Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at Shah Makhdum Airport.

A video circulating on social media shows Yusuf raising his left arm and moving forward as if to tap the prime minister on the back. Tarique steps away and gestures for him to stay back.

Sources in the Cabinet Division and Public Administration Ministry told The Daily Star that Yusuf was withdrawn over what they described as "unprofessional behaviour". The official notification gave no reason for the transfer.

Yusuf was instructed to leave Rajshahi around 7:30pm, and he departed for Dhaka around 11:00pm, according to sources.

When contacted, Public Administration Secretary Quamruzzaman Chowdhury described the transfer as routine.

Yusuf was appointed divisional commissioner on August 19, after serving as a member-director of the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation.

Yusuf could not be reached for comment. Officials from the Cabinet Division and Public Administration Ministry declined to comment on the record.



Choked with plastic, polythene and household waste, Kalunagar canal in the capital's Hazaribagh remains virtually blocked, emitting a foul odour. A partly damaged fence along the canal allows more waste to enter. During the monsoon, canal water and rubbish spill onto the road, causing waterlogging. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: **PALASH KHAN**

'Your wrong politics giving Awami League chance to return'

Porwar tells govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar yesterday accused the government of creating an opportunity for the Awami League to return to politics through "wrong politics".

"Do not push the country into a fire of anarchy and instability. By creating unrest and pushing the streets towards confrontation, you are giving the Awami League a chance to return to politics through your own wrong politics," he said.

Porwar made the remarks at the 49th founding anniversary programme of Bangladesh Labour Party as the chief guest at the party's central office in Segunbagicha, Dhaka.

Speaking at an event in Rajshahi on Tuesday, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman alleged that the ousted regime and a section of the opposition were conspiring to destabilise the country. Citing intelligence reports, he claimed that the AL was sending money from abroad to a political party in Bangladesh to create unrest.

Jamaat-e-Islami's central publicity department issued a press release containing Porwar's remarks.

The Jamaat leader said the government had become embroiled in disarray within seven months because the BNP had failed to move away from political immaturity and short-sighted leadership.

Hilsa fishing continues in Jamuna despite ban



PHOTO: ZAHIDUR RAHMAN UZZAL TALUKDER

Some fishers catch hilsa despite the ongoing 22-day government ban.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jamalpur*

Hilsa fishing continues in the Jamuna river in Jamalpur's Madarganj upazila despite the ongoing 22-day government ban, with the fish being sold openly at local markets, residents alleged.

The government imposed the ban from October 8 to 29 on catching, transporting, storing and selling hilsa to protect mature fish during the spawning season.

According to local sources, fishermen are catching hilsa using current nets and trap nets at several points along the Jamuna, including Manikdar, Jamathal and Dakatmara.

The fish is being sold for Tk 600-1,000 per kilogramme, depending on size, before being transported to wholesale markets in Madarganj and elsewhere.

Locals alleged that some traders buy the fish at night, mix it with other varieties and sell it at different markets.

Three fishermen, Robiul, Hamidur and Kaddus, said they were unaware of government assistance available during the ban and hence continued catching hilsa to support their families.

Meanwhile, a mobile court led by Madarganj UNO Sumon Chowdhury seized 20kg of hilsa from Balijuri Bazar on Tuesday night.

The seized fish was distributed to two orphanages, said Upazila Fisheries Officer Kamruzzaman. He said 600 metres of illegal current net had also been seized and destroyed during a recent drive.

UNO Sumon said drives would continue against illegal hilsa fishing and trading during the ban.

Mother, daughter killed in Ctg road accident



A mangled microbus after the accident. PHOTO: UNB

UNB, *Chattogram*

A woman and her daughter were killed and four others injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Sitakunda upazila of Chattogram yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Rozy Akter, 55, wife of Najibur Rahman, and Nazma, 40, wife of Aslam Hossain.

The accident occurred around 8:30am in Barabkunda area when the Bandarban-bound microbus, carrying six people, crashed into an electricity pole as its driver lost control of the steering, leaving two dead on the spot and four others injured, said Md Aminuzzaman, sub-inspector of Baro Aulia Highway Police.

The microbus was badly mangled in the accident.

The injured were taken to Sitakunda Upazila Health Complex, from where they were referred to Chattogram Medical College and Hospital.

Three of a family burnt in Tongi gas cylinder blast

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gazipur*

Three members of a family suffered severe burns after a gas cylinder leaked and exploded at a residence in the Cherag Ali area of Tongi in Gazipur early yesterday.

The victims were identified as Md Lalchan, 60, his wife Nasima Begum, 50, and their 16-year-old daughter Tanisa Akter, according to police.

Dr Sultan Mahmud Shikder, a resident physician at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in Dhaka, said Lalchan suffered burns to 95 percent of his body, Nasima 85 percent and Tanisa 86 percent.

Their condition remains critical, said the doctor.

The explosion occurred around 6:00am yesterday, said Md Arifur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Tongi West Police Station.

The three were taken to the institute around 7:30am, said OC Arifur Rahman, adding that Lalchan and his wife work at a garment factory.





Monda, a traditional sweetmeat originating in Mymensingh's Muktagachha, is the country's 26th product to receive Geographical Identification (GI) status from the government.

PHOTO: STAR



MUKTAGACHHA'S MONDA

A 200-year-old sweet legacy

AMINUL ISLAM, *Mymensingh*

For more than two centuries, monda, a traditional sweetmeat originating in Mymensingh's Muktagachha, has remained a popular delicacy, with demand peaking during puja celebrations.

Devotees offer the sweetmeat as "bhog" at puja mandaps and serve it to guests at home during the festivities.

According to the book "Gopal Paul-er Prasiddha Monda Alekhya", Ram Gopal Paul (1799-1907), popularly known as Gopal Pal, first prepared monda in Muktagachha in 1824 and established a shop there.

The book, written by his late descendant Ramendranath Paul, says Gopal first offered the sweetmeat to Maharaja Suryakanta Acharya Chowdhury, a zamindar of Muktagachha.

Impressed by its taste, the zamindar appointed Gopal to prepare monda for guests at his palace and provided financial assistance to expand the business.

Ramendranath later continued the business under the name Ramendranath Paul and Brothers.

The shop is now run by Rabinranath Paul and other fifth-generation descendants of Gopal Paul.

A wooden sculpture of Gopal, carved by local carpenter Swarup Sutradhar some 124 years ago, is displayed in a glass showcase inside the shop, alongside the sweetmeat's original trademark.

Muktagachha's monda received Geographical Indication (GI) status in 2024, becoming Bangladesh's 26th GI product.

The sweetmeat has gained recognition across the subcontinent and beyond, attracting visitors throughout the year.

Over the years, prominent figures, including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, classical music maestro Ustad Alauddin Khan, former West Bengal chief minister Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy and philanthropist Ranada Prasad Saha, have visited the shop.

Monda from Muktagachha was also served to then Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi and Britain's Queen Elizabeth during their visits to Dhaka.

The 1996 edition of "Bangladesh: A Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit", written by Alex Newton, Betsy Wagenhauser and Jon Murray, also mentions the shop.

"The Rajbari (Muktagachha Rajbari) here draws the occasional visitors, but the town is best known throughout Bangladesh for its famous sweet shop Gopal Paul-er Prasiddha Monda," the book says, describing it as the country's best monda.

Dulal Das, the shop's manager, said they had no plans to open branches elsewhere to preserve the sweetmeat's reputation and authenticity.

He said regular monda sells for Tk 700 per kg (20 pieces), while the variety made with date molasses (nolen gur), available between November and March, costs Tk 800 per kg.

"We follow the original recipe to prepare the sweetmeat and make no compromise with the quality and our ethical business practice," said Rabindranath Paul, one of the owners.

"We select the best chhana (cheese curd) to prepare monda while maintaining hygiene strictly," he added.

Imtiaz Ahmed Tansen of the Mymensingh Regional Antiquities Protection Committee said, "Monda is a part of the history and tradition of Mymensingh region and we are proud that the sweetmeat still draws attention from home and abroad."

103 crude bombs recovered in Rajshahi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

A total of 103 crude bombs were recovered from an abandoned cement sack in Rajshahi city's Aduburi area early yesterday, said the Special Response Battalion (SRB).

An SRB-5 team recovered the bombs after receiving information around 2:00am that a suspicious sack had been left on the eastern side of a litchi orchard, said Lt Col Md Faisal Ishtiaq, commanding officer of SRB-5.

Of the bombs, 64 were wrapped in red cellophane tape and 39 in black tape, he said.

The recovered explosives were later handed over to Kashiadanga Police Station through a general diary entry for legal action.

An investigation is underway, and legal action will be taken against those involved, the SRB official added.



Attendants wheel a patient on a stretcher out of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital as intern doctors begin a 24-hour work stoppage from 8:00am yesterday, pressing five point-demand, including an end to medical equipment shortages and improved security. The strike is disrupting services, forcing patients from distant areas and their relatives to leave the hospital. The photo was taken in front of the emergency department.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Three carriages of Karnaphuli train derail in Laksam

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Cumilla*

Three carriages of the Dhaka-bound Karnaphuli Commuter derailed in Cumilla's Laksam upazila around 12:30pm yesterday, disrupting train movement on one line of the Dhaka-Chattogram route.

Rajib Chandra Kar, officer-in-charge of Laksam Railway Police Station, said the derailment partially damaged the track. Services on the other line remained operational.

No casualties were immediately reported, though several passengers reportedly sustained minor injuries.

A rescue train reached the scene around 5:00pm to assist with the recovery operation. However, no derailed carriage had been removed by 8:15pm, the OC said.

A railway rescue team was working to clear the line and facilitate repairs, he added.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

The Karnaphuli Commuter derails in Laksam, Cumilla, disrupting train movement on one line.

DEFENCE COOPERATION

Turkey, Indonesia, Qatar, Pakistan sign accord

REUTERS, *Ankara*

Turkey, Qatar, Pakistan, and Indonesia signed an agreement yesterday to boost defence cooperation and strengthen defensive capabilities, the Turkish defence ministry said.

In a statement, the ministry said the countries signed the "Badr Memorandum of Understanding" in Doha as a sign of their desire to further deepen cooperation and develop partnerships.

"The agreement holds substantial economic importance," it said, adding the accord sought to foster cooperation in military production, boost military capabilities, and help collaboration in technical military training, research and development.

"By leveraging the unique military production capabilities of each country, the initiative will facilitate cooperation and integration, enhance defence industrial capacities, and enable the fulfilment of the needs of allied and friendly nations," it added.

Turkey, which has Nato's second-largest army and a robust defence industry, has been helping Gulf nations, including Qatar, where it has a military base, bolster their defences amid the Iran war.

In August, it signed a mutual defence pact with nuclear-armed Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, under which an attack on one party constitutes an attack on all. Ankara also has close ties with Indonesia, notably in the defence industry.

The ministry said the Badr accord would strengthen ties between the countries' defence industries and bolster collaboration to promote security and achieve shared objectives.

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkey signed the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement on August, saying an armed attack on any one of the three countries would be regarded as an attack on all, in a pact the signatories said was aimed at strengthening collective deterrence and military cooperation.



PHOTO: **AFP**

Students block the main entrance of the University Institute of Technology (IUT) in Lannion, western France, yesterday, during a nationwide protest over learning conditions. The leader of France's hardline CGT union has called for strikes after talks with Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu over fresh protests collapsed.

Resume three-way Ukraine peace talks

Trump envoy asks Putin, secures release of US citizen; 4 killed in Russian strikes across Ukraine

REUTERS, *St Petersburg*

US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff yesterday urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to consider resuming US-mediated peace talks with Ukraine and to review new ideas on ending the war amid Washington's latest push to stop Europe's bloodiest conflict since World War Two.

The talks in a grand imperial palace in St Petersburg, the ninth time that Witkoff has met Putin in person, began with a goodwill gesture from Russia - the release of Stephen Hubbard, a retired US school teacher held in Russia.

Putin also offered to help US President Donald Trump in dealing with Iran, saying Russia had a decades-long relationship with Tehran which it has repeatedly offered to leverage to address US concerns about Iran's nuclear programme.

Russia could also supply large quantities of fertiliser to the United States to help US farmers, the Russian president told Witkoff, saying he wanted to discuss a potential meeting in China next month with Trump which the Kremlin has suggested could also include Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The encounter comes amid concerns in Kyiv and among its allies that the United States is backing away from Ukraine, at times holding back real-time intelligence on Russian attacks and hobbling Ukraine's military communications.

Four people were killed in a wave of Russian strikes across Ukraine yesterday, the government said. Ukraine's Prime Minister Sergiy Koretsky said two people were killed when a drone hit a 24-storey building in the capital, Kyiv, while two others were killed in the northeastern Kharkiv region.

Meanwhile, President Zelensky said he hoped for a positive outcome from US envoy Steve Witkoff's meeting in Russia and that he supports talks between the leaders of Kyiv, Washington and Moscow. Earlier on Tuesday evening, he said that intelligence on early warning systems for Russian strikes "works now", and that he is "thankful" to the US.



- Putin offers to help Trump in dealing with Iran
- Zelensky says he supports trilateral talks with US, Russia

The US has previously denied limiting intelligence sharing. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio yesterday rejected accusations Ukrainians were dying because the US was withholding intelligence.

Relations between Kyiv and Washington have soured since Trump partially lifted sanctions to strike a diesel-supply deal with Putin.

IN BRIEF



Tanker attacked near Strait of Hormuz: UKMTO

Baghdad closes border crossing with Iran under US pressure

AFP, *Dubai*

A ship was struck yesterday by an "unknown projectile" off the coast of Oman, near the Strait of Hormuz, sparking a fire, a British maritime security agency said.

The tanker, 11 nautical miles (around 20 kilometres) off the town of Bukha, is "now at anchor", the UKMTO reported. "All crew are reported as safe. There is no reported environmental impact at this time," it said.

The agency later reported another incident, which occurred on Tuesday off the coast of Iraq. A projectile hit a tanker 30 nautical miles from the town of Al Faw, causing no casualties or damage.

Meanwhile, Iraqi authorities yesterday closed a border crossing with Iran "until an unspecified date", an Iraqi source told AFP, with two other sources saying the US is pressuring Baghdad to close more crossings in order to tighten the screws on Tehran.

Bloomberg, Trump ramp up spending ahead of midterms

REUTERS, *Washington*

US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that he would spend more than $400 million on Republican campaign efforts, while the New York Times reported that former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg was spending $80 million to help Democrats ahead of the November 3 midterm congressional elections.

The financial commitments come as Democrats seek to win control of Congress from Trump's Republicans in the November 3 midterm elections.

Trump's super PAC, MAGA Inc, and an affiliated group, No Going Back PAC, have spent at least $226 million on the elections so far

"I have spent, or will be spending, over 400 Million Dollars by Election Day. More than 300 Million Dollars has already been spent on Advertising, Direct and Indirect Voter Contact, Rallies, Rally Arenas, Telerallies, Get Out the Vote Programs, Election Integrity, and more," Trump said.

Trump's super PAC, MAGA Inc., and an affiliated group, No Going Back PAC, have spent at least $226 million on the elections so far, campaign filings show.



Delhi court orders release of CJP leaders Das, Ranka

AGENCIES

A Special Executive Magistrate (SEM) yesterday ordered release of India's CJP leaders Saurav Das, Ashutosh Ranka after their five days custody was extended by two more days on October 19.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Ritu Raj, acting as the SEM, passed the release order after accepting the sureties furnished by Das and Ranka, according to Bar and Bench.

Delhi Police had earlier sought an extension of judicial custody by three more days.

"Truth has triumphed," said Das after the release order by SEM court, reports Hindustan Times online.

Meanwhile, UN experts called on Tuesday for an independent investigation into Indian authorities' conduct in a recent crackdown on protests, where they said demonstrators had sustained injuries and some reported being subjected to ill-treatment, reports Reuters.



PHOTO: **REUTERS**

Migrants of various nationalities take part in a caravan known as "Faith and Hope" (Fe y Esperanza), seeking migration documents that would allow them to continue their journey towards central and northern Mexico, in Tapachula, Chiapas, Mexico, on Tuesday.

World falls 'dangerously short' on climate action

AFP, *Paris*

Global commitments to cut planet-heating emissions are falling far short of the Paris climate goals and put the world on course for 2.6C warming this century, the UN warned yesterday.

The report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) lays bare the chasm between rhetoric and action when it comes to tackling global warming, and the challenge before political leaders at November's COP31 climate summit.

Even if countries deliver their latest climate pledges in full, global temperatures could still rise 2.6C above pre-industrial levels by 2100, said the annual Emissions Gap Report.

That would blow past the historic goal agreed in Paris: keeping warming well below 2C while striving for a safer 1.5C. Any chance of keeping to 1.5C had been "lost" due to decades of insufficient climate action, the report said.

"The world can no longer avoid overshooting the 1.5 degree limit, and the consequences are already devastating," said UN chief Antonio Guterres in a statement to launch the closely-watched report.

"Deadly floods, brutal heatwaves, raging wildfires, lost lives, crippled economies, deepening inequalities, and those least responsible are suffering first and worst."

Overall, global greenhouse gas emissions in 2025 were broadly on a par with record levels in 2024, with the difference between the two years too small to call, the report said.

Carbon emissions just from burning coal, oil and gas rose slightly in 2025 compared to the previous year.



UN chief Antonio Guterres warns those least responsible suffer 'first and worst'

Guterres said deep and immediate cuts were needed to protect humanity from worsening impacts but instead "emissions remain at record levels. And national climate plans and current policies fall dangerously short".

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

End this cycle of fatal road crashes

Natore crash highlights persistent failures to ensure road safety

The death of at least 12 people in a head-on collision between a bus and a truck on the Pabna-Rajshahi highway in Natore early Tuesday is yet another reminder of how unsafe our roads remain. Twenty others were injured in the crash; many of them are in critical condition. According to survivors, the bus helper was driving recklessly while the driver slept at the back at the time of the crash. Although police have yet to confirm this allegation, it raises serious questions about unauthorised driving, compliance with road safety rules, and the monitoring of long-distance buses.

Among the victims was a 70-year-old onion trader who was travelling to buy seeds for his business. A couple travelling to visit relatives during Durga Puja was also among the victims. The husband died, while his wife remained in critical condition. A bank employee and his daughter were killed, while his wife and 10-year-old son were injured. Such deaths are unacceptable because they could have been prevented by enforcing basic safety rules. How long will it take for the authorities to learn to value passengers' lives and recognise the urgent need to make our roads safe?

According to Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, at least 1,25,405 people were killed and 1,76,249 injured in 72,736 road crashes across the country between January 2014 and June 2026. The Road Safety Foundation also reported that 7,963 children were killed in road crashes between 2020 and September 2026, including 2,513 who died while travelling to or from educational institutions. These numbers are horrifying and show how road crashes continue to devastate families across the country.

Shouldn't bus operators ensure that only qualified and authorised drivers take the wheel? Shouldn't drivers be given adequate time to rest before and during long journeys? When exhausted drivers or unqualified helpers operate buses, the risk of fatal crashes increases significantly. What are the authorities doing to enforce these basic safety measures?

Reckless driving, dangerous overtaking, driver fatigue, a shortage of skilled drivers, unfit vehicles, and weak enforcement of traffic laws continue to put passengers' lives at risk. In the Natore case, if the allegation that the helper was driving while the driver slept proves to be true, it would reveal a serious breach of safety rules. Shouldn't bus operators ensure that only qualified and authorised drivers take the wheel? Shouldn't drivers be given adequate time to rest before and during long journeys? When exhausted drivers or unqualified helpers operate buses, the risk of fatal crashes increases significantly. What are the authorities doing to enforce these basic safety measures? Most importantly, why is the Road Transport Act, 2018 still not being properly enforced? These are questions we continue to ask while the authorities fail to take effective action.

We urge the government to strictly enforce the Road Transport Act, 2018, strengthen oversight of public transport operators, prevent unqualified people from driving vehicles, and ensure compliance with rules on driving hours and rest periods. Regular inspections are essential to remove unfit vehicles from the roads, while reckless driving and dangerous overtaking must be stopped through effective monitoring and enforcement. Reliable road crash data is also needed to take proper preventive measures. The Natore district administration has formed a committee to investigate the crash. Its findings must be made public, and anyone found responsible should face appropriate legal action.

Forests need more than paper promises

Encroachment in Patuakhali reserved forest exposes gaps in enforcement

Why is it that our forests are so often treated as expendable? On one hand, we are quick to make gestures that look commendable on paper. But we are far less consistent in realising them on the ground. The latest report of such attrition of forestland comes from Patuakhali's Rangabali, where an estimated 200 to 300 trees have been cut down in a reserved forest to make way for watermelon cultivation. Forest officials say an excavator is also being used to build an embankment on the site. The work has continued despite the Forest Department's objections and its filing of two cases and a general diary with police. What is most troubling is that the encroachment may have been given an appearance of being legal.

Last October, the district administration reportedly leased at least 30 acres of reserved forest for two years. However, a Rangabali upazila land office document from last year, signed by a former UNO, appears to have permitted farming for only one season or a year. Those overseeing watermelon cultivation claim they leased it from the administration, while the current UNO denies any involvement. How could land in a reserved forest be leased at all, and why did the Forest Department's objections fail to stop the cultivation work?

There is a tendency in Bangladesh to use nature's resources for immediate gain, and not treat them as living ecosystems whose value exceeds what they can provide. This is made worse by routine disregard for laws, an acute lack of enforcement, and repeated use of political patronage for a senseless desire for profit. In a climate-vulnerable country like Bangladesh, coastal mangroves (which surround the reserved forest in question) shield communities from cyclones and storm surges, and their destruction strips away an effective natural defence.

Local communities should be empowered to be stewards of the forests, not mere beneficiaries. We urge the government to thoroughly investigate the leasing of forest land and ensure accountability for those responsible. Coastal regions are certainly well-suited for watermelon cultivation, but it should never come at the cost of a forest's health. Genuine institutional goodwill, matched by enforcement, can make all the difference.

Why does the JS body take comfort in the law and order situation?



Kamal Ahmed is consulting editor at The Daily Star. He led the Media Reform Commission under the interim government. His X handle is @ahmedka1.

■ **KAMAL AHMED**

Amid the prevailing doom and gloom over the worsening cost-of-living crisis, the administration has offered news that could be encouraging. According to a press release on the fifth meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Home Affairs, held on October 15, official statistics "indicated a notable improvement" in the country's law-and-order situation. The press release has also added that committee members "expressed satisfaction" with the reported improvement.

Isn't it a wonderful relief to know, from these statements, that we are now better protected against the threat of random crime? The situation has apparently improved to such an extent that our elected representatives are satisfied. Could it mean that anyone can now venture out onto the streets without having to worry about being mugged, or that no one would turn up at our homes or offices demanding money in the name of donations or protection? Should parents rest assured that gang members will not put drugs into their children's hands, or that no one would dare to sexually harass or assault their daughters?

Alas, less than 48 hours after the committee meeting, Ishraque Hossain, a now-former junior minister regarded by many within BNP as a rising star, led an anti-drug "operation" in his constituency while openly brandishing a firearm. Ishraque, whose conduct has often attracted controversy in the past, later sought to explain his activities. He said that residents of the area had repeatedly complained about local drug trade, adding: "I have held meetings with the police at least 30 to 40 times. They give different explanations each time, saying they lack manpower and vehicles." But his justification for taking the law into his own hands raises an uncomfortable question: whose version of the law-and-order reality should we believe—the parliamentary standing committee or a prominent ruling party politician?

Ishraque undoubtedly has questions to answer about how he conducted himself that day. Nevertheless, some of his observations cannot be dismissed. The police have yet to recover fully from the violent aftermath of the 2024 uprising and remain inadequately equipped to confront drug dealers, some of whom do not hesitate to shoot at officers from a distance. If the police are indeed struggling with manpower, transport, and operational capacity, that is a serious concern. But how can the administration then claim that law and order has improved significantly when those responsible for enforcing the law are themselves struggling to maintain control?

Moreover, figures presented at the standing committee meeting, according to several newspapers, offer little ground for complacency. Between January and September this year, the Department of Narcotics Control reportedly conducted 82,626 anti-drug operations, filing 25,021 cases against 26,270 accused persons. Drug-related cases rose by approximately 37 percent compared with the corresponding period in 2025. These are staggering numbers. They mean that anti-drug enforcement officers conducted an average of more than 300 operations every day over the nine-month period. For parents worried about their children's exposure to drugs, such statistics are anything but reassuring; they are more likely to send their blood pressure soaring.



VISUAL: **ANWAR SOHEL**

Some other crime figures presented at the meeting are equally troubling. Reported rape cases rose sharply in 2026, with a total of 5,381 cases recorded between January and September—an increase of approximately 31 percent over the same period last year, which translates into an average of nearly 20 cases every day. Third-quarter figures, covering July to September, showed an even steeper increase of 55.4 percent, suggesting a further deterioration. Meanwhile, cases involving burglary and forced entry, theft and illegal firearms have also increased.

The home ministry's statistics did show improvements in some categories, notably murder, robbery, kidnapping, mob violence, and attacks on police. But these figures must be treated with caution. Complaints that police stations refuse or fail to register cases of burglary and robbery are common. Did the ministry's murder count include those 379 bodies that were recovered by the river police between January and August? If crimes go unrecorded, official statistics may paint a more reassuring picture than the reality experienced by victims.

Recent crackdowns on juvenile gangs in several districts have exposed another longstanding problem. Many of these gangs are involved in petty crimes, including phone snatching, harassment of girls, burglary, drug peddling, etc. The tragic killing of Oprotim, the 13-year-old son of a university teacher in Cumilla, in September, brought the growing problem of juvenile criminality into sharp focus.

The media have also extensively reported grave crimes committed by organised gangs, including kidnapping, extortion, and murder linked to territorial control and rivalries. The impact of these groups on local communities is amply evident in places like Jungle Salimpur in Sitakunda and Khulna city. A joint-forces operation reportedly restored a degree of normalcy in Jungle Salimpur. Khulna, however, continues to struggle with the influence of rival gangs, with police officers being advised against going out alone after dark.

During my recent visits there, local journalists told me that gang members sometimes notify the police in advance of their planned activities and even occasionally announce them through Facebook. Such warnings can effectively signal that law enforcement personnel should keep away from designated areas for a specified period. If these accounts are accurate, they point to a deeply troubling reality: criminal gangs are not merely committing offences but are also asserting their ability to dictate where and when the police can operate.

Police reluctance to enter crime hotspots is not confined to these two districts. It appears to be part of a broader pattern in which their lack of vehicles, equipment and operational capacity leaves the force more inclined to respond after crimes occur than to prevent them or confront perpetrators in the act. This could also help explain why the police appear more successful in apprehending, for example, alleged members of the banned Awami League than in dealing with vigilante groups that organise mob violence and take the law into their own hands. Police inaction or reluctance to respond to allegations of extortion and land grabbing involving members of the ruling party has also become a recurring concern.

Against this backdrop, the parliamentary standing committee's satisfaction with the law-and-order situation seems detached from the realities experienced by ordinary citizens. Rising rape and drug-related cases, the growing influence of juvenile and organised gangs, allegations of selective policing, and the apparent inability of law enforcement agencies to confront certain criminal groups all pose real threats to people's safety and security.

Some crime indicators may have indeed improved. But a fundamental question is whether citizens actually feel safer, whether they can rely on the police when threatened, and whether the law is enforced impartially against the powerful as well as the powerless. For those who have experienced extortion, robbery, harassment or violence—or who fear that their loved ones may become victims of crime—the difference between official statistics and everyday reality is profound. The ministry's reassuring assessment means little to them.

Climate resilience must not come at the cost of women's debt



Dr Shahrina Akhtar is assistant professor at the Institute of Development Studies and Sustainability (IDSS) at United International University (UIU), and adjunct faculty member in the Department of Agriculture at Daffodil International University.

■ **SHAHRINA AKHTAR**

Rehana lives in a char in Kurigram. When the Brahmaputra flooded last year, it took her vegetable plot, two goats, and the plinth of her house. No relief came that could replace them. So she did what millions of women across rural Bangladesh do after a disaster: she took a loan from one NGO to raise her homestead, a second to buy seed and, when the weekly installments became impossible, a third to repay the first two. When the next flood comes, she will still be paying for the last one.

Rehana's story is not uncommon. Bangladesh is often praised as a global leader in adaptation, and in many ways it deserves the praise. But a large part of that resilience is being paid for by the poorest households, mostly by women, and mostly through debt.

The scale of household spending is startling. A 2019 study by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) estimated that rural households in Bangladesh spend nearly $2 billion a year of their own money preparing for and recovering from climate-related disasters. That is far more than the government or international donors spend on them. Where does this money come from? Partly from savings and remittances, partly from selling livestock and jewellery, and increasingly from borrowing.

Bangladesh's microfinance sector serves more than 32 million borrowers, around 90 percent of whom are women. Microcredit was designed to help women start small businesses. In climate-exposed regions, it now works as an informal disaster insurance and adaptation fund, at commercial interest rates.

NGOs prefer female borrowers because they repay reliably, attend weekly meetings, and respond to group pressure. Women are also increasingly the backbone of farming. As men migrate to cities and abroad, about three-quarters of employed women now work in agriculture, according to the 2022 Labour Force Survey. Yet only 13 percent of women in land-owning rural households hold agricultural land, alone or jointly. Without collateral, they are largely shut out of formal bank credit, leaving NGO and informal loans as their only options.

Under repayment stress, women also eat less, sell off their jewellery, take on extra wage work, or pull daughters out of school. Research in coastal Bangladesh also links climate stress with child marriage.

Globally, climate finance is discussed in billions of dollars. In the village, it comes down to weekly instalments of a few hundred taka. IIED estimates that less than 10 percent of finance from international climate funds is directed to the local level. Our domestic financial system has not filled this gap either.

Agricultural insurance remains largely limited to pilots. Bangladesh Bank's green finance policies have helped industries, but little reaches smallholder women. The microcredit regulator caps interest rates but does not track the over-indebtedness that follows repeated disasters. Bangladesh should make a move from microcredit to climate justice. Measuring what households spend on adaptation and recovery would strengthen Bangladesh's hand in negotiations for international adaptation and loss-and-damage funds.

The government should prioritise creating climate-resilient finance products for women. Low-interest adaptation loans, emergency savings, and bundled weather index insurance, with payouts triggered by rainfall or flood levels, should reach women before they are forced to borrow.

Debt management following disasters should be restructured too. When a flood or cyclone is officially declared, a moratorium on instalments, with rescheduling and interest relief, should be automatic for affected borrowers, not left to the goodwill of individual NGOs.

The government should also prioritise creating climate-resilient finance products for women. Low-interest adaptation loans, emergency savings, and bundled weather index insurance, with payouts triggered by rainfall or flood levels, should reach women before they are forced to borrow. International funds should be channelled directly to communities. A share of climate finance should flow through locally led mechanisms, such as community adaptation funds managed with women's groups, union parishads and local NGOs.

Joint land titling for women and acceptance of alternative collateral by banks would open formal agricultural credit to the women who now farm much of the country's land. Universities, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, and the Microcredit Regulatory Authority should also jointly track climate-related borrowing and over-indebtedness by gender and region.

Bangladesh's resilience is often celebrated as a national achievement. But when it depends on poor women borrowing at higher interests to repair damage they did nothing to cause, it is not justice. The question for policymakers is simple: who should pay for adaptation? Today, in rural Bangladesh, the answer is Rehana. And to change this, climate finance (both national and international) must reach her before her next instalment, not after the next flood.

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The Tuptup tragedy and the growing cost of regulatory inaction



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■ JANNATUL NAYM PIEAL

The recent fire incident at Tuptup Resto & Resort in Cox's Bazar's Inani area reportedly killed 10 tourists, including six members of an extended family. The building had wooden floors, walls, and staircases, leaving guests on the upper floors little chance of escaping once the flames spread. The establishment also had no fire safety licence, environmental clearance or approval from the Cox's Bazar Development Authority (CoxDA), the deputy commissioner, the local union council, or municipal authorities. The Department of Environment (DoE) had reportedly fined the resort in May, Fire Service officials say they issue notices, while fines can be imposed through mobile courts, although enforcement has remained limited. The DoE can penalise environmental violations but, according to its officials, cannot itself close or demolish the establishments concerned. CoxDA has the authority to demolish unauthorised structures, but says it must follow procedures involving final notices and executive magistrates. These limitations may be real, but they do not end the discussion. If several agencies can identify the same establishment as being dangerous, but none can ensure it stops taking in customers, what purpose does this elaborate regulatory machinery serve? The DoE reportedly imposed about Tk 1.27 crore in fines on 55 hotels, resorts, and restaurants over one year, averaging roughly Tk 2.3 lakh in fines for each. But for some businesses, paying a fine can be cheaper, faster, and simpler than changing anything in their structure to comply with the law.

Under the 2013 master plan, construction within 300 metres of the shoreline inside the municipality and 500 metres outside it is prohibited. CoxDA says it has approved no hotels or resorts along the Cox's Bazar–Teknaf Marine Drive road. The area has also been designated an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) since 1999. According to a Prothom Alo investigation, Cox's Bazar had just over 200 hotels and resorts in 2000, a figure that rose to approximately 500 in 2010 and exceeded 1,000 by 2020. Today, the district has more than 2,000 hotels, resorts, and cottages. How did so many buildings pop up in an area where approval was supposedly unavailable? Owners cannot be excused for breaking the rules, but neither can authorities be excused for watching those violations become an entire industry.



The deadly fire at Tuptup resort has again exposed the authorities' failure to enforce safety regulations in the tourism sector. PHOTO: STAR

Fire Service officials say they issue notices, while fines can be imposed through mobile courts, although enforcement has remained limited. The DoE can penalise environmental violations but, according to its officials, cannot itself close or demolish the establishments concerned. CoxDA has the authority to demolish unauthorised structures, but says it must follow procedures involving final notices and executive magistrates.

The marketing of these properties as "eco resorts" adds another layer of absurdity. Bamboo and timber may look appealing in promotional photographs, but they do not automatically make accommodation environmentally responsible or safe. Fire Service officials have stressed the importance of open spaces and single-storey units in genuine eco resorts. Instead, multi-storey wooden structures accommodate tourists in locations where firefighting equipment and emergency access may be inadequate. The word "eco" should not become a convenient substitute for compliance with building and fire safety standards.

Unfortunately, Cox's Bazar is not an isolated case. In Bandarban, only 32 resorts reportedly have environmental clearance, while an operator in Mirinja Valley claims none of approximately 89 resorts there has every required approval. In Khagrachhari, only four of 42 residential hotels had renewed fire licences. Sajek Valley has experienced fires in 2017, 2021, and 2023, yet reports suggest none of the estimated 126 resorts there had fire extinguishers as of 2025. Fire engines must travel from towns hours away. Near the Sundarbans, more than 20 resorts have reportedly been built in Khulna and Satkhira amid allegations of land clearance and canal filling. The landscapes differ, as do the regulations. But everywhere, tourism appears to have expanded with little regard for safety and environmental concerns.

There can be a revealing comparison made with Kolkata. After a fire at Shikha Inn in August killed nine people, seven of whom were Bangladeshis visiting for medical treatment, authorities arrested the leaseholder and owner as well as inspecting hundreds of hotels and guest houses. Of 960 establishments inspected, only 41 reportedly met fire safety requirements; the remaining 919 received closure notices. Kolkata's own record is hardly admirable: another hotel fire killed 14 people there in April last year. The crackdown came after the deaths, not before. But government agencies in Cox's Bazar already possessed enough information to act. Police sources suggest only around 120 of the district's more than 500 establishments are fully compliant, while the Fire Service reportedly considers only about 40 to be safe. If these estimates are anywhere near accurate, why were tourists allowed to keep booking rooms without being told the risks?

Even the criminal investigation following the Tuptup fire has raised questions. According to a report, the resort's website identifies Tanvir Sultan Mia and Niaz Morshed as its owners, yet only the former was named in the police case, alongside several employees. Ukhiya police say they initially knew of only one owner and may include additional names as the investigation progresses. Legal experts have also questioned whether the charges, including causing death by negligence under Section 304A of the Penal Code, adequately reflect the circumstances. Whether more serious charges are legally justified will depend on evidence of the individuals' knowledge, conduct, and responsibility. But the immediate question is about why identifying the people responsible for running an establishment that had received repeated official warnings should prove so difficult even after a fatal fire. The investigation must establish who knew what, who made the decisions, and who continued collecting revenue while safety concerns remained unresolved.

This negligence threatens the country's tourism industry, which heavily relies on domestic tourists. Bangladesh received 5,85,145 foreign tourists last year, down by 7.6 percent from 2024, and international coverage of another fatal resort fire will do little for the country's image, dubbed as "the world's least touristy country" by The Telegraph in 2018. But the more immediate concern is a family travelling from Dhaka or other parts of the country for a short holiday. How is that family supposed to know whether its chosen resort has working extinguishers, usable exits, or even the permission to operate? Most guests cannot inspect a building's regulatory history before making a reservation. They assume someone responsible has already done so. For guests at Tuptup, that assumption proved fatal.

The district administration should coordinate the agencies concerned and establish a legally sound process for promptly closing establishments that pose immediate danger. A public register showing hotels' approval and fire safety status would allow visitors to make informed choices. Multi-storey timber accommodation should not receive overnight guests without verified escape routes. The government must also establish why the warnings and demolition notices against Tuptup went unenforced, and whether officials neglected their duties. Holding owners accountable is essential, but stopping there would leave the wider system of negligence intact.

After every tragedy, we hear promises of inspections, mobile court interventions, and tougher enforcement. Then the headlines fade, and families make their bookings. For Tuptup, the paperwork was apparently plentiful, but what was missing was action. Unless the authorities can explain why they allowed a known hazard to remain in business, another round of notices will offer little reassurance to the people sleeping behind the next set of wooden stairs.

NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY DAY

Our road safety problem is not a lack of laws, but a lack of enforcement



Monorom Polok is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star.

■ MONOROM POLOK

Commuting or travelling is an integral part of our lives. Yet in Bangladesh today, this basic action carries a risk to life, and the risk often increases depending on one's economic status. Though we observe National Road Safety Day every year, our record of reducing the risk on our roads has been poor. The head-on collision between a bus and a truck on the Pabna-Natore highway, which claimed 12 lives just two days ago, is yet another tragic testament to the persistent toll of road fatalities in our country. It seems we have somehow reached a point where every time we step out of our houses, we risk getting injured, or at the extreme, losing our lives.

Last year alone, 7,359 people died in road crashes, according to the Road Safety Foundation (RSF), and 16,476 others were injured. However, it must be noted that road crash data in Bangladesh varies considerably across different organisations and platforms. For example, Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity reported 9,111 road crash-related deaths for 2025, while the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) recorded 5,490. Moreover, the international standard of counting deaths within 30 days of a crash is not practised in Bangladesh, which means the real toll is likely higher.

Apart from fatalities, the number of injured is also likely to be much higher than reported because many choose not to report minor accidents. However, even minor accidents can lead to loss of income, trauma and high medical costs. In a country where about one in five people lives in poverty (the World Bank estimated the national poverty rate at 22.5 percent in 2026), the number of people who are one accident away from falling into debt or extreme poverty is also high.



PHOTO: STAR

A head-on collision between a bus and a truck on the Pabna-Natore highway claimed 12 lives on October 20.

Among all the collisions, motorcycle crashes account for the highest number of fatalities—40 percent as per RSF data. The second group most affected by road crashes is pedestrians, who account for 34 percent of all fatalities. In September alone, 106 of the 423 people killed in road crashes were pedestrians, per RSF. That motorcycles claim the largest share of road fatalities is not surprising, given they offer no protection against other vehicles on fast-paced roads and are considered accident-prone worldwide, especially in low-and-middle income countries, where they dominate the roads.

However, the pedestrian death toll should ring an alarm bell, because these people were not even in a vehicle. They were simply walking along or crossing the roads. This means our vehicles are not only unsafe for the people riding in them but also pose serious risks for those travelling on foot. And this risk disproportionately affects the poor, who are more likely to walk because they often cannot afford transport costs. It further widens inequality, as the poor, when injured in a road crash, may struggle to afford medical treatment or cope with lost income.

Yet, discussions on reducing crashes often revolve around legal reforms, although Bangladesh has enough traffic laws. Notably, several key sections of the Road Transport Act, 2018 were watered down after pressure from transport associations. However, several improvements have been made in the newly drafted Road Safety Act, 2026. So, it is not a lack of laws that stands as a barrier to improving the conditions on our roads; the problem rather lies in enforcement.

That proper enforcement can lead to a change in drivers' habits is evident from a recent change in Dhaka's roads. Since May 7, AI-powered cameras installed at several intersections in Dhaka have been scanning number plates and filing cases automatically against vehicles that run red lights, cross stop lines, or block lanes. It is the first fully automated traffic enforcement system in Bangladesh. By the end of June, around 1,500 cases had been filed through cameras at 19 intersections. We had traffic signals before, but many did not follow the rules. Even when traffic police were stationed at every signal, they had to force cars to stop by directing them manually. Often, they had to physically walk across the road to stop the traffic.

What has changed now at the intersections with AI-powered cameras is that people realised they must pay the price for breaking the law. Since the ticket is automatic, it is no longer easy to contest the violation, no matter how small or big. This shows that if the likelihood of actually being punished is high and hard to avoid, crimes do come down. This should be our focus.

In fact, one of the main reasons behind road crashes—speeding—can also be brought under control using cameras and AI. This has already been partially implemented on the Dhaka Elevated Expressway, where an automated speed-enforcement pilot has been running. More recently, AI cameras and an auto-fine system were launched on August 18 along about 250 kilometres of the Dhaka-Chattogram highway. In the first 24 hours, 449 cases were filed, with speeding as the most common violation. It is time to bring this to the rest of our roads. Budget concerns can be addressed by placing cameras first at crash hotspots identified by RSF, such as Jatrabari, Demra, Mohammadpur, Kuril, and Airport Road in Dhaka.

Additionally, ineffective regulation of vehicles that allows unsafe vehicles to operate freely on the roads, endangering everyone's lives, must be addressed. RSF lists faulty or unfit vehicles and unskilled drivers among the major causes of crashes, and recommends restructuring the National Road Safety Council and bringing the BRTA, the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) and the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) under its supervision. Others propose an autonomous Road Safety Authority that is not beholden to transport unions.

There is also a need to make our roads more inclusive. For example, footpaths and footbridges are sometimes built without thinking of groups, such as children, the elderly, and people with physical impairments. RSF has also pointed out that encroached footpaths and a shortage of usable footbridges also contribute to road crashes in Dhaka. Encroached footpaths and non-inclusive footbridges push vulnerable groups onto busy streets. Besides, footpaths should be wide enough for persons with disabilities to use. My grandfather, who could move freely indoors, did not find it easy to go outdoors without anyone's assistance due to heavy traffic around our house.

To work, to learn, to see the people we love, we have to go out and use roads. A country cannot ask its people to stop using roads. What it can do is make sure they reach their destinations safely. We do not lack laws; neither do we lack the tools to enforce them. What we need is the will to enforce the rules every time and for everyone, to regulate the vehicles we allow on the road, and to build streets that make space for children, the elderly, the poor, and persons with disabilities. This National Road Safety Day, the question is not whether we know what must be done. It is whether those actions are taken so that a trip out of the house no longer carries the risk of not returning.



Two awards in two continents for Tama Mirza

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

National Film Award-winning actor Tama Mirza continues to solidify her footing across Bangladeshi cinema and streaming platforms, pairing critical acclaim with commercial draw. Best known for her award-winning performance in ***Nodijon***, the popular actress has built a versatile filmography through high-profile feature films like ***Surongo*** and ***Daagi***, alongside critically received web productions such as ***Amalnama***.

Tama's work in ***Amalnama*** earned her Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards 2025—her second win for Best Actor (Female) at the ceremony. Within twenty-four hours of receiving the honour, the artiste boarded a flight to the United States to accept the Dhallywood Film and Music Awards 2026.

Reflecting on the recognition for ***Amalnama***, she noted the collaborative effort behind the project and its reception among viewers. "Winning an award for the film feels wonderful. Everyone who watched it offered warm praise and positive feedback. The character gave me immense scope to perform, and it turned out to be a truly special project."



PHOTOS: **STAR**

She credited director Raihan Rafi for shaping the project's vision. "Raihan Rafi chose a brilliant story and crafted it with immense care. His direction always brings something distinct, and in ***Amalnama***, he demonstrated that vision once again. I am deeply grateful to the audience and The Daily Star for this honour."

"Receiving two prestigious awards back-to-back feels incredible. I extend my sincere gratitude to the organisers of the Dhallywood Awards."

For the acclaimed actress, consecutive accolades serve as a reminder of the artistic standard expected of her as an actor. "As an artiste, there is an internal sense of responsibility to deliver quality work. I have done some strong projects, and moving forward, I want to sustain that standard. I intend to be selective and choose roles that offer genuine scope for acting. Hopefully, I can share news of exciting new projects soon."

Beyond her screen career, Tama has quietly stepped into a distinct professional realm. For the past few months, she has been working in the corporate sector as an Assistant Vice President in Brand and Communications at a private bank, balancing a full-time office schedule with her creative pursuits.

"I am thoroughly enjoying corporate life at the bank. It is a completely new world outside of acting. Following a routine, going to the office, and working with new colleagues feels refreshingly different. I hope to carry out this new role with the same commitment."



Matthew McConaughey to run for US president?

Matthew McConaughey has reignited speculation about a potential 2028 presidential bid after releasing a six-minute video urging Americans to embrace political independence ahead of the 2026 midterms.

Calling independence the original road rather than a middle ground, the Oscar winner argued that independent leaders could break congressional gridlock and hold major parties accountable.

While he did not formally enter the race or endorse any candidate, the message drew backlash from critics warning independent votes could split crucial electorates. McConaughey previously weighed a Texas gubernatorial run in 2021 before stepping back from public office.

The appeal comes as Gallup reports a record 45 percent of Americans identify as political independents.

'Michael' moves to Golden Globes drama slate

Lionsgate's attempt to position its Michael Jackson biopic, ***Michael***, as a musical or comedy for the 84th Golden Globes has been rejected.

The Golden Globes awards committee denied the studio's submission, placing the Antoine Fuqua-directed film into the competitive drama category. Under Globe rules, songs must actively advance the narrative—rather than serve as performance re-creations—to qualify as a musical.

Starring Jaafar Jackson in his acting debut, the film recently became the first biographical feature to cross $1 billion globally. Despite the procedural setback, the ruling does not affect co-stars Colman Domingo and Nia Long, as supporting categories do not split by genre. Nominations will be announced on December 7.



EVENTS

'Pohal Neya'



Alliance Française de Dhaka hosts ***Pohal Neya***, an immersive participatory exhibition by French storyteller Laetitia Troussel-Luber. Inspired by the shifting banks of the Padma and Ganges, the event weaves together clay workshops, mythic lore, and collective storytelling, offering an evocative exploration of memory, heritage, and human connection through shared art.

Date: Friday–Monday | October 23–26, 2026

Time: 3:00pm–9:00pm

Venue: Alliance Française de Dhaka, Dhanmondi

NEWS

Cop among 4 held for bike hijacking

FROM PAGE 12

Police Lines, was detained after the victim traced his stolen motorcycle to a Facebook advertisement, said Khulshi Police Station Sub-Inspector Md Nasim.

Jinia Chakma, Bandarban additional superintendent of police (crime and operations), told The Daily Star that departmental action had been taken against Anik.

Mohammad Apu, 22, of Companiganj upazila in Noakhali, initially filed a general diary after the incident. Police later turned it into a case following Anik's arrest.

According to the case statement, Apu and his friends were travelling from Noakhali to Cox's Bazar on three motorcycles on the night of October 16.

Around 1:30am the following day, a car and two motorcycles blocked their way on Zakir Hossain Road in front of Foy's Lake Eye Hospital.

Several people allegedly took their motorcycle keys, beat Apu and threatened him with sharp weapons before forcing him into the car. They then drove away with his motorcycle.

After taking him around different roads, the suspects left Apu by the roadside in the Shershah area around 3:00am after taking his mobile phone.

The stolen motorcycle, a Yamaha sports bike on test registration, was worth around Tk 5.5 lakh, according to the case statement.

Later, Apu found a Facebook post from an account named Anik Das offering the motorcycle for sale. Posing as a buyer, he contacted the seller through Messenger and agreed to buy it for Tk 5.3 lakh, sending Tk 5,000 as an advance.

"Anik Das asked Apu to come to the police box in front of the Bayezid Link Road, where Apu informed the Khulshi police. Anik Das was subsequently arrested there with the assistance of Khulshi police," SI Nasim said.

Based on Anik's information, police arrested Wahid and Mohiuddin Selim in the BITAK Bazar area under Pahartali Police Station. They told police the motorcycle was with Wahed Nasir alias Diamond.

Police recovered it from a garage in Faiyaltali Bazar around 4:30am on Tuesday. Two other motorcycles were recovered from the suspects' possession.

Police are trying to arrest other alleged gang members and recover the private car used in the robbery.

Bus had no fitness clearance for 5 months

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accident was simply the result of a momentary lapse in concentration," he said.

Sources in the transport sector said operating a bus on a 500-kilometre overnight route with a single driver was hazardous. They also said drivers sometimes took over from one another informally on long routes, increasing the risk of accidents.

Hayat said the committee would also examine the allegation about who was driving.

"Our preliminary assessment suggests the driver may have been drowsy, leading to a loss of control. We will reveal all findings regarding the cause of the accident after the final investigation concludes," he said.

Meanwhile, many of the at least 30 injured passengers were receiving treatment at hospitals in Rajshahi and Natore. No new deaths had been reported until the report was filed last evening.

Tokyo to push for re-inclusion of India in BIG-B

FROM PAGE 12

the initiative when circumstances become favourable.

"Now that the political situation has changed, Japan wants to revive its strategic vision for the region. BIG-B will feature in the upcoming highest-level talks," the official added.

As of February 2024, Japan had provided approximately 385 billion yen in development assistance to Northeast India, much of it for infrastructure and connectivity projects, according to the Embassy of Japan in India.

During a visit to India in 2023, then Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida expressed hope that Japan would work with Bangladesh and India to promote regional prosperity, harnessing the potential of the Bay of Bengal to make the region more stable and prosperous.

In December 2024, Japan's then ambassador to Bangladesh, Iwama Kiminori, said connectivity in the Bay of Bengal was essential to Japan's FOIP vision.

Speaking at an event in Dhaka, he said the Matarbari deep-sea port was being developed not only for bilateral use but also to connect Bangladesh with regional and global supply chains.

Trust and understanding between Bangladesh and India were crucial to achieving economic prosperity through regional connectivity, he said.

Relations between Bangladesh and Japan experienced some strain during the interim government's tenure, according to foreign ministry officials.

Japan's ambassador to Bangladesh, Saida Shinichi, sought meetings with Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on several occasions but was unable to secure an appointment during much of the interim administration's tenure, they said.

Saida took charge on January 10, 2025 and made a courtesy call on Yunus two days later.

Meanwhile, it remains uncertain whether Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman will accompany Tarique on the Japan visit, scheduled from October 26 to 29.

Asked at a press conference on Tuesday whether the foreign minister would accompany Tarique, Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam said: "If his schedule matches, he will join."

Khalilur served as the interim government's high representative for the Rohingya crisis and national security adviser.

During the visit, the two countries are expected to elevate their existing strategic partnership to a comprehensive strategic partnership (CSP), The Daily Star has learnt from officials involved with the proceedings.

A CSP represents a higher and broader tier in Japan's diplomatic framework than a standard Strategic Partnership and encompasses a deeply multi-layered, expansive network of cooperation across almost all sectors.

At present, Japan maintains CSPs with ASEAN, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Laos to advance security, economic resilience, and a free and open Indo-Pacific.

In an announcement on Tuesday, Japan's foreign ministry said the visit is expected to strengthen bilateral ties and enhance coordination towards realising an updated FOIP.

Japan launched BIG-B in 2014 to promote industrial development and connectivity around the Bay of Bengal. The initiative was initially focused on the Dhaka-Chattogram-Cox's Bazar corridor.

In 2023, Japan proposed a broader Bay of Bengal–Northeast India Industrial Value Chain Initiative to strengthen economic links between Bangladesh and northeastern India.

BIG-B rests on three pillars: industry and trade, energy, and transportation. It aims to encourage Japanese investment, support industrialisation and improve connectivity, linking production centres with regional and global markets through infrastructure such as the Matarbari deep-sea port.

Asked about Japan's proposal to develop Matarbari as a subregional hub at the press conference, Siam said Bangladesh's economic development goals were closely linked to port infrastructure.

"The ports should be ready to handle and enhance capacity for our future imports and exports. That is how the Matarbari project has emerged. If the port can handle more after meeting our demands, then we will think about it," he said.

BNP MP receives farming incentive cheque from PM

FROM PAGE 12

director of Rajshahi Sugar Mills Ltd, said farmers were selected based on the amount of companion crops, locally known as "sathi foshol", they grew alongside sugarcane. Those growing more companion crops were given priority, she said.

Contacted yesterday, Syed Shaheen Shawkat, BNP's central organising secretary (Rajshahi division), said Sayeed qualified as a registered sugarcane farmer, despite also being an MP.

"There is no reason to view his receiving the incentive negatively, as the scheme covers farmers who met the eligibility criteria," he added.

Shawkat said the initiative aimed to utilise the otherwise vacant land between rows of sugarcane by growing additional crops, including pulses, cabbage, potatoes, onions, ginger and garlic.

As sugarcane takes a long time to mature, farmers can grow short-duration crops in the intervening spaces and harvest two to three additional crops a year, boosting both their income and the supply of vegetables and spices, he said.

The unused land between sugarcane rows nationwide could amount to several hundred thousand acres, he added.

At Tuesday's event, 15 farmers were called onstage to receive cheques one by one after the prime minister inaugurated the digital disbursement process.

Sayeed, identified as a sugarcane farmer supplying Rajshahi Sugar Mills, was the first to receive a cheque, Shawkat said.

The Daily Star could not reach Sayeed for comment despite repeated phone calls.

In a Facebook post, Sayeed said sugarcane cultivation and supply had been a family tradition spanning generations, from his grandfather and father to himself.

He also said he had personally supplied hundreds of truckloads of sugarcane to Rajshahi Sugar Mills and would continue to do so.

He added that the mill authorities had the relevant records and documents to verify his claims.

Magura Jubo Dal leader found dead at bus counter

FROM PAGE 12

"politically motivated" cases over the past 17 years.

His brother Raj Mir alleged that Saker was shot dead in a premeditated attack stemming from political rivalry. "We want justice," he said.

Locals said they found Saker unconscious inside the Royal Express counter at Magura Bus Terminal around 6:00am and took him to Magura 250-bed Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Dr Mainul Hasan of the hospital's emergency department said Saker had died before being brought there.

"We found a puncture wound on the back of his head and informed police," he said.

The body was kept at the hospital morgue for autopsy.



Saudi-backed Yemeni government fighters fire a truck-mounted recoilless rifle during battles against Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis at the Jabal Han front west of the city of Taiz in Yemen yesterday. PHOTO: **AFP**



Seven more die of dengue, 1,373 get hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven more people died of dengue and 1,373 were hospitalised across the country in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

All seven deaths were reported in Dhaka South City Corporation.

With the latest fatalities, this year's death toll has risen to 364, while the total number of cases has reached 1,16,990. Currently, 5,970 dengue patients are receiving treatment at hospitals nationwide.



Plastic, polythene and other non-biodegradable waste discarded by market traders pile up along the Bhairab river, threatening aquatic life and biodiversity. Once a vital waterway, the river remains important to Khulna's trade, transport and local livelihoods. The photo was taken at Daulatpur Launch Ghat in Khulna yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Sajek road blockade resumes today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangamati*

Sajek Gano Odhikar Rokkha Committee and Sajek Karbari Association will resume their indefinite blockade of the Sajek tourist road today, following a temporary suspension for Durga Puja, as their three-point demand, including the withdrawal of armed JSS members allegedly stationed in different parts of Machalong, remains unmet.

The decision was announced in a joint statement issued yesterday afternoon by Natun Joy Chakma, president of Sajek Karbari Association, and Babudhan Chakma, convener of Sajek Gano Odhikar Rakkha Committee.

The blockade will continue until further notice, said the statement. It requested tourists currently visiting Sajek to leave by yesterday.

Bijoy Kanti Chakma, member secretary of Sajek Gano Odhikar Rakkha Committee, told The Daily Star, "We had suspended our blockade from October 16 to 21 on the occasion of Durga Puja. As the puja ends today [yesterday], our previously announced blockade programme will be enforced from 6:00am tomorrow [today]. Our blockade programme will continue until our three-point demand is implemented."

Earlier, the two organisations began an indefinite blockade on the Sajek tourist road from October 11. They later placed three demands before the administration and suspended the blockade for two days following assurances.

However, as the administration failed to meet their demands within two days, they enforced the blockade again on October 15.

Malaysia bans civil servants from using Waze over Israel links

AFP, *Kuala Lumpur*

Malaysia banned civil servants from using the navigation app Waze, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's office said yesterday, citing data security concerns over its links to Israel.

Kuala Lumpur is a longstanding and vocal critic of Israel and maintains no diplomatic relations with it.

Waze, which is owned by Google LLC, was founded in Israel and remains incorporated there.

Anwar "has decided to prohibit the use of the navigation application Waze among all civil servants," his office said.

"This measure is intended to safeguard government information and users' personal data against the threat of misuse by the Israeli regime," it added in a statement posted on Facebook.

The decision was made at a National Cyber Security Committee meeting chaired by Anwar on Tuesday, local media reports said.

The Malaysian government did not give further details on why civil servants were prohibited from using Waze, which uses data from drivers to provide real-time traffic information.

Nearly 8,000 children killed

FROM PAGE 1

died while crossing or walking along roads.

As Bangladesh observes Road Safety Day today, the figures underscore the dangers that persist nearly eight years after the student-led road safety movement of 2018 prompted promises of sweeping reforms.

RSF compiled the report from nine national dailies, 17 national and regional online news portals, electronic media reports and its own sources.

Its Executive Director Saidur Rahman said few schools have dedicated buses, forcing students to walk along busy roads or use unsafe public transport.

"Many educational institutions are located beside highways and major roads without pedestrian crossings, speed-calming measures, traffic signals or adequate footpaths," he said.

Parents and campaigners said zebra crossings are often absent or ignored, while speeding vehicles endanger children in school zones, particularly where designated walkways and traffic police are lacking.

Motorcycle riders and passengers accounted for the largest share of child fatalities, at 2,958 (37.14 percent), while another 2,193 (27.53 percent) died as passengers in other vehicles.

Among pedestrian deaths, three-wheelers, including CNG-run auto-rickshaws, auto-tempos, Nasimons and other locally made vehicles, killed 1,271 children. Heavy vehicles, including buses, trucks, covered vans and pickup trucks, killed 1,126, while private cars, microbuses, ambulances and jeeps were involved in 317 deaths. Motorcycles killed another 98.

Rural roads were the deadliest, claiming 2,713 children's lives, followed by regional roads (2,082), highways (1,974) and urban roads (1,194).

Afternoons recorded the most fatalities (2,634), followed by mornings (2,168), midday (1,813), night (598), evening (546) and dawn (204).

RSF blamed speeding, reckless driving, weak traffic law enforcement, poor road safety awareness among drivers, parents and children, and unsafe road design, particularly in rural areas. It said the transport system fails to protect children, leaving them disproportionately vulnerable.

The government is preparing a comprehensive road safety law, targeting enactment in 2027. The draft proposes banning children under six from motorcycles and those under 14 or shorter than 135 centimetres from front car seats, while requiring appropriate safety restraints.

Road Transport and Highways Division Additional Secretary Anisur Rahman said the proposed law would address gaps in the Road Transport Act, 2018. Separate guidelines on standard helmet use and pedestrian safety are also being developed.

Saidur said schools lack adequate safety education, while drivers often fail to exercise caution near educational institutions. He called for technology-based speed monitoring, better driver training and regulatory reforms.

Kazi Md Shifun Newaz, assistant professor at Buet's Accident Research Institute, said schools should be built away from roads and highways.

"Road safety education is not a structured part of our school curriculum. In many countries, children learn from an early age how to cross roads safely, use footpaths and follow traffic rules. Such initiatives are largely absent in Bangladesh," he said.

He said clear, organised school surroundings and footpaths would help drivers spot children and children see approaching vehicles. "Under the current conditions, children often emerge suddenly onto roads, leading to accidents. Parents also place too little emphasis on teaching safe road behaviour."

Motorcycle riders and passengers accounted for the largest share of child fatalities, at 2,958 (37.14 percent), while another 2,193 (27.53 percent) died as passengers in other vehicles.

Children often ride motorcycles without helmets, while parents cross roads indiscriminately, violating traffic rules, he added. "Children tend to imitate these behaviours, making it difficult for them to understand road risks and normalising unsafe practices. These problems are particularly acute around schools."

Meanwhile, Anisur said, the BRTA was conducting awareness programmes and training in schools and colleges.

"Efforts are underway to incorporate road-use rules and safety issues more comprehensively into textbooks so that students can learn about safe road use from an early age. We also want to engage young people more actively in road safety initiatives."

In February, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education proposed introducing traffic and road safety education in primary schools, including safe road-crossing practices.

Star journo Sohrab Hossain laid to rest

FROM PAGE 3

Sohrab died at Patuakhali Medical College Hospital on Tuesday at the age of 55. He breathed his last around 7:10pm, with the hospital's death certificate listing cardiac arrest as the cause of death.

According to family members, Sohrab was riding a motorbike from his village home in Auliapur to his residence at Banani Mor yesterday morning. Around 8:30am, he felt pain and stopped near Molla bus stand before collapsing on the road. Local residents and family members rushed him to the hospital, where he later died.

Sohrab joined The Daily Star on January 1, 2004. He leaves behind his wife, two sons, a daughter, and many relatives and well-wishers.

Under police's nose, for nearly a year

FROM PAGE 1

Cars frequently lined the road outside the walled property, while loud music continued late into the night, within earshot of the nearby police outpost, according to residents.

Around 2:00am that night, a team from the Detective Branch (DB), acting on instructions from the police top boss, raided the property belonging to Abdullah Al Jahir, an additional deputy inspector general (DIG) of police headquarters, uncovering alleged drug use and illegal DJ parties.

The raid has raised questions about how such gatherings could continue for so long in a police personnel's residential area without attracting police intervention.

Shorab Al Hossain, the officer-in-charge of Khilkhet Police Station, said they knew the house belonged to a senior police official and that social gatherings were held there regularly. However, they were unaware of DJ parties, drug consumption or other antisocial activities. "When we came to know about it, the DB conducted a drive," he added.

Between 20 and 22 parties were being organised at the property every month since 2025, with participants joining through online registration, according to the DB.

During a visit to Police Housing-1 in Purbachal yesterday, residents, caretakers and security personnel described frequent music, dancing and gatherings at the house. Such gatherings have been going on for around a year, said Abdul Jahir, who lives with his family in a small house about 100 yards from the property for five years now.

He said that six to seven cars would sometimes be parked outside the property, while music played from large sound systems. People of different ages could be seen dancing in the open space in front of the house.

The gatherings initially took place three to four times a month but had become more frequent recently, particularly on Thursdays and Fridays.

Some parties began in the morning, while others took place in the afternoon or evening, sometimes continuing after Esha prayers.

The music would pause during the call to prayer. A nearby mosque's imam described a similar experience.

He said he occasionally walked along the road after Fajr prayers and had noticed men and women dancing outside the house early in the morning.

The house was known locally as a venue rented out for private functions, said a security guard at the entrance to Police Housing. The Daily Star approached personnel at the nearby police outpost; none agreed to speak.

The raid has raised questions about how such gatherings could continue for so long in a police personnel's residential area without attracting police intervention.

"We have come to know that 20 to 22 DJ parties were organised there every month," Elias Kabir, deputy commissioner of DB's Uttara division, told The Daily Star.

The property had been used for such gatherings since 2025, with Mahbub Alam acting as the co-host and managing the arrangements of the DJ parties. Mahbub used to charge 30 percent of the profit generated from the parties, and additional DIG Jahir used to get 70 percent, he said.

The house has six rooms, five of which were rented. The caretaker occupied the remaining room. Bookings were accepted through online platforms Airbnb and Travela. The entire property, including the five guest rooms, was rented out for Tk 18,500 a day for 10 people, while participants paid Tk 600 each as registration fees, according to Elias.

Two youths -- Sadman Rifat and Param Guha Niyogi -- coordinated with Mahbub to organise the parties.

Most participants were from affluent families, including university students and bankers.

Describing the raid, Elias said detectives found around 22 vehicles at the property. Music was playing at high volume, while smoke from shisha filled the premises.

SEIZURE LIST RAISES QUESTIONS

Despite allegations of widespread drug consumption and regular DJ parties, the DB's seizure list from the nearly three-hour raid paints a different picture.

According to the list, detectives recovered a bottle of Indian Iconic White whisky, 500ml of Royal Stag whisky from a one-litre bottle, 200ml of Russian Smirnoff vodka from a one-litre bottle, and an empty 750ml bottle of locally produced Carew's Imperial whisky. They also seized just one yaba tablet, equipment used for consuming yaba, and a small quantity of a substance identified as "kush".

The relatively small quantity of drugs recovered during an operation that led to the detention of 85 people has raised questions even among some senior police officials. Asked about the limited seizures, Elias Kabir, deputy commissioner of the DB's Uttara division, told The Daily Star that participants had consumed alcohol and yaba before detectives arrived. As a result, investigators could recover only what remained, he said.

Additional DIG Jahir repeatedly contacted investigators after the raid began, seeking to prevent Mahbub's arrest, said a high official of DB police asking not to be named.

"He called Elias Kabir three times during the operation," the official said.

Contacted, Additional DIG Jahir admitted he spoke to investigators on Mahbub's behalf, saying he initially believed the caretaker had properly discharged his responsibilities.

"I believed he had informed the guests about the house rules, including the prohibition on drug use. I did not want a poor man to face unnecessary trouble if he had performed his duties properly," he said, adding that he did not repeat the request after learning what had happened.

Mahbub told him only 35 to 40 people would attend the gathering, whereas he later learnt from DB's briefing that 84 people had been found at the property.

"That made me realise he had misrepresented the facts. Now I need to find out whether he misled me about other matters as well," he said, adding that he would examine Mahbub's role in managing the property and consider legal action if negligence or wrongdoing was established.

Meanwhile, the 85 people -- 26 women and 59 men -- detained from the residence were sentenced through summary proceedings.

The men were sentenced to one month in jail and fined Tk 1,000 each, with an additional 15 days in jail for failure to pay the fine. The women received 15 days' imprisonment and a Tk 500 fine each, with another three days in jail for non-payment.

Elias said they are now trying to get details on the organised operation involving regular bookings, paid registrations and repeated parties.

Fatalities jump 26% since 2018

FROM PAGE 1

After the movement in 2018, the then government enacted new laws and policies to improve road safety. However, there was little impact of the efforts.

According to the data of the passengers' welfare platform, 68,285 people were killed in 50,936 road crashes between January 2018 and June 2026, an average of 22 deaths and 16.4 crashes a day.

With the grim data in the backdrop, Bangladesh observes National Road Safety Day today under the slogan "Safe Roads, Prosperous Country, Bangladesh First".

To strengthen road safety measures, the government is preparing to enact a comprehensive road safety law by 2027.

Following the 2018 student-led movement demanding road safety, the government passed the Road Transport Act and issued 17 directives through the Prime Minister's Office.

A government-appointed committee made 111 recommendations in 2019 to reduce crashes and restore discipline in the transport sector. A high-level task force was subsequently formed to oversee their implementation.

However, while the law came into effect in November 2019, the accompanying Road Transport Rules were approved in December 2022.

Key provisions, including mandatory appointment letters for public transport drivers, regulated working hours, adequate rest periods and accountability of vehicle owners, remain inadequately enforced.

The National Road Safety Council, the government's highest policymaking body on road safety, has not met since November 15, 2022, although it is supposed to convene at least once every six months or as required.

Meanwhile, the National Road Safety Strategic Action Plan for 2021-2024 has expired, with no new plan approved and no comprehensive assessment of its implementation made public.

Insufficient personnel and logistical support remain major obstacles to enforcing traffic laws.

According to a highway police report published in May this year, the force had around 3,030 personnel and 99 patrol vehicles, seven of which were out of service.

Police officials estimate that at least 6,000 more personnel and 250 patrol vehicles are needed for effective highway policing.

"Our law enforcement and manpower capacities are inadequate. As a result, traffic violators often escape punishment," Anisur Rahman, an additional commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's traffic division, told The Daily Star.

The continued operation of unauthorised three-wheelers, including Nasimons and Karimons, on highways also highlights gaps in enforcement.

Over 6.26 lakh registered vehicles lacked updated fitness certificates as of July 2025, while another 80,309 commercial vehicles had exceeded their prescribed economic life.

According to the data of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), over 6.26 lakh registered vehicles lacked updated fitness certificates as of July 2025, while another 80,309 commercial vehicles had exceeded their prescribed economic life.

The government has introduced the Motor Vehicle Scrapping and Recycling Guideline, 2026, to facilitate the removal of such vehicles.

The increase in the number of motorcycles on the roads has heightened road safety concerns.

According to BRTA, the number of registered motorcycles more than doubled from 24.13 lakh in 2018 to 50.80 lakh in August 2026.

Talking to this newspaper, Kazi Shifun Newaz, assistant professor at Buet's Accident Research Institute, said the technical measures to enhance road safety already exist but are not being implemented effectively. He stressed the importance of enforcing speed limits, controlling light vehicles, and conducting mandatory road safety inspections.

PROPOSED LAW

The Road Transport and Highways Division has prepared a draft Road Safety Act, 2026, containing 15 chapters, 111 sections, and two schedules.

The proposed law seeks to strengthen institutional accountability, improve road infrastructure, regulate driver behaviour and vehicle standards, and ensure emergency medical care for crash victims.

Government and private hospitals and clinics would be required to provide immediate treatment without demanding registration, tickets or advance payments.

Mandatory safety audits for road construction and renovation, identification of crash-prone locations and accountability for defects in road design, construction and maintenance have been proposed.

The draft also includes provisions for footpaths, safe crossings, ramps, and facilities for people with disabilities.

The maximum prescribed punishment for repeat traffic offences would be doubled, alongside driving licence demerit points. Penalties are also proposed for using mobile phones, smoking, or engaging in other distracting activities while driving.

Speaking to this correspondent, Anisur Rahman, additional secretary of the Road Transport and Highways Division, said his division, BRTA, police, and relevant health sector agencies are working together to improve road safety through better management and improved post-crash care.

Regarding fatalities from motorcycle crashes, he said, "A large number of working-age people are losing their lives. Guidelines on helmet standards are being developed to reduce such crashes and fatalities. The use of helmets has been made mandatory for motorcyclists and pillion riders. Some additional rules have also been introduced for motorcycle movement on highways."

The uneven road to controlling hypertension

FROM PAGE 3

studies use overlapping samples from the 2022 BDHS, while the WHO report relies on older STEPS data.

Organised hypertension treatment programmes in Bangladesh have reported higher control rates among enrolled patients.

At a seminar in May, Dr Syed Zakir Hossain, former line director of the Non-Communicable Disease Control programme under DGHS, said 446 NCD corners had been established, and over 9,18,000 patients with hypertension had been registered digitally.

"Through our digital system, blood pressure is now being successfully controlled among 58 percent of patients under treatment," he said.

The figure applies to patients enrolled in the programme, not everyone with hypertension. Population-level estimates also include people who have never been diagnosed or started treatment.

The October study's authors called for community screening, continuous access to affordable medicines, and the integration of patient education and follow-up into primary care, particularly for people with limited education.

Biman sets Riyadh flight date, resumes Dammam services

FROM PAGE 3

despite its reopening on October 18.

Under a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) effective from October 17, airlines must obtain prior permission from Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation before operating flights to or from the airport.

The Saudi-led coalition said it intercepted drones over the Madina region and the kingdom's Eastern Province, Reuters reported yesterday.

Yemen's Houthi movement denied launching the drones or carrying out military operations against Saudi Arabia.

BOOK REVIEW: GRAPHIC NOVEL

Retelling mythology through comics in Dhaka Comics'

'THE STORY OF DURGA'

SADMAN AHMED SIAM



ILLUSTRATION: NAFISA AFREEN MEGHA

Durga Puja has been one of the most significant festivals in Bengali culture for centuries, evolving through the ages. It has taken different forms in response to different events, and each mandap tells a different story of the community that has built it. The history of Durga Puja and the mythology behind it have been told and retold in diverse forms, some becoming cultural icons, such as Akashvani's radio programme Mahishasurmardini. Numerous literary works have centred on Durga Puja, and *The Story of Durga* (Dhaka Comics, 2026) makes a praiseworthy contribution to that legacy through the art form of comics. The comic book was illustrated by artist Arindom Kundu Ayan and edited by Kaushik Majumdar.

The comic book tells the story behind Vijaya Dashami. It begins with Mahishasura and how he received a boon from Brahma that no man or god could ever defeat him. With that blessing, he conquered kingdom after kingdom, finally defeating Indra, the king of the gods, and taking Amaravati, the capital of Swarga, where the gods dwell. Humiliated, Indra returns to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and complains about Mahishasura. In response, they create a goddess named Durga, as the boon granted Mahishasura invincibility against men and gods, but not against a woman. Durga, in turn, receives ten gifts from ten gods, each symbolising a fundamental characteristic of the god who presents it. In a ten-day battle with Mahishasura, she finally defeats him and severs his head. The day Mahishasura is killed is celebrated as Vijaya Dashami. That is why Durga is also known as Mahishasurmardini, the slayer of Mahishasura.

The story is simple, yet it has captured the attention of Bengalis for centuries, and they have carried it in their hearts. It has been written from different perspectives, and scholars have attempted to decipher its meanings from different angles. Still, it continues to generate new interpretations. The misogyny inherent in Mahishasura, his failure even to consider that a woman could defeat him, ultimately leads to his demise. Durga's victory has symbolised the triumph of good over evil for centuries, inspiring countless individuals not only to seek spiritual freedom but also to embrace political resistance. One prominent example is Kazi Nazrul Islam, who, in his famous poem "Anandamoyeer Agamane", celebrated Durga as a force of resistance against British colonial rule. The poem led to his arrest on sedition charges. Such is the influence of Durga and her story on Bengali culture.

In this context, Dhaka Comics' rendition of the story deserves special praise. There have been relatively few comic books exploring the mythological origins of Durga Puja, and Dhaka Comics' edition is splendid in its artwork and storytelling. Although short, the 22-page comic captures the story in its entirety. It is refreshing to see Dhaka Comics retain its signature artistic style. While the characters are drawn in a manner that pays tribute to their traditional depictions and remains faithful to the mythology, the illustrations also incorporate a distinctly modern style.

The battle and transformation scenes deserve special mention. The different battles between Mahishasura and the gods, and between Mahishasura and Durga, are vividly depicted. The action unfolds sequentially in a manner that could easily be adapted into a short animated film. The transformation scenes showing Mahishasura changing from a buffalo into an elephant, or assuming a half-buffalo, half-human form, are equally fascinating. The artist handles these sequences excellently, making them particularly captivating for readers.

Considering the long legacy of Durga Puja and its impact on Bengali culture, Dhaka Comics took on an enormous responsibility when it attempted to retell a story that has been revered by Bengalis for centuries in a form in which it is not traditionally told. But the experiment fulfils its promise and makes a successful contribution to the Durga Puja canon. Hopefully, it will inspire more artistic interpretations in the future, from more voices and perspectives.

Sadman Ahmed Siam, *as the name suggests, is indeed a sad man. Send him happy quotes at: siamahmed09944@gmail.com.*

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

When the grotesque becomes ordinary in Mashiul Alam's world

Review of *'The Meat Market: Ten Stories and a Novella'* (Eka, 2024) by Mashiul Alam

NOORA SHAMSI BAHAR



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

In the titular story of Mashiul Alam's *The Meat Market: Ten Stories and a Novella*, translated from Bengali by Shabnam Nadiya, a murdered man watches his own body become a meal for the people he loves. At the local meat market, he witnesses his own slaughter, decapitation, skinning and dismemberment, before parts of his body are sold to his brother-in-law, cooked by his wife and relished by his unsuspecting family. The intimacy of a shared meal thus becomes an act of cannibalism. The horror lies not only in the desecration of the dead man's "carcass" but also in the domestic rituals surrounding it: his family eats without knowing what it is consuming, making nourishment inseparable from an unspeakable violation. Elsewhere in the collection, too, the body remains vulnerable to the appetites of others. What makes these stories so disturbing is their refusal to confine such horrors to a remote, fantastical universe. Reality and nightmare become the warp and weft of narratives rooted in recognisable social relations and the precarious lives of people whose suffering does nothing to interrupt the world around them. In this, Alam's imagination finds a kindred spirit in Mojaffor Hossain's *Meet Human Meat and Other Stories* (Moving Words, 2025), as both authors blur the boundaries between the grotesque and the recognisably real, using the macabre and the bizarre for sociopolitical commentary.

In "Milk", the collection's opening story, which also won the 2019 Himal Southasian Short Story Prize, hunger is not an abstraction but a force that dictates the rhythm of existence. Agricultural labourers reap rice, sleep on straw in tin-roofed shacks, eat rice with legumes and green chillies, and return to the fields. Their lives unfold through a relentless succession of physical tasks, "cutting, threshing, boiling, and husking the rice harvest", while their hunger remains insatiable: "they just wanted to eat, eat, and eat". The narration reproduces this repetition, making the reader feel the weight of labour rather than simply observe it. The story's cruelty extends beyond human suffering, too. When a frightened dog runs between haystacks, apparently having committed no offence other than nourishing a toddler who had somehow survived on mud and rice water, the father, Salimuddi, brings the heavy back of a hoe down on her head. The blow falls within the same material landscape as harvesting and eating, without a dramatic pause to distinguish cruelty from the daily demands of survival. Hunger, exhaustion and violence become inseparable from bodily existence.

The violence in Alam's stories ranges from intimate fantasies of revenge to extrajudicial killing and mass complicity. In "The Hands of the Man of Light", a child imagines breaking his gambling father's fingers: "He would throw the horrible man flat on his back in the yard, and then climb onto his chest, and then he would break all his fingers, crack crack crack..." In "The Underpass", Kabirul is forced to accompany three unknown men through Dhaka's hellish yet familiar cityscape, eventually witnessing an extrajudicial killing in which a man is ripped apart by his legs. Around this spectacle, the bizarre and macabre accumulate: monkeys act as masseuses, a ghost sits at a sales centre's front desk, and bats with balls of flame for eyes fly overhead. The incongruity transforms the city into a world where the absurd and the horrific coexist with the everyday. By the time Kabirul awaits the blade, his throat taut with anticipation, the question of why he must die remains unanswered. In "Field Report from Roop Nagar", visceral gore unfolds with the relentlessness of a serial-killer film as a young woman's throat is slit and her body consumed by the men who abduct her, while the entire town falls into a deep, mysterious sleep. The scene recalls Sleeping Beauty, except that no magic explains the town's slumber, no one rescues the damsel in distress and there is no happy ending. The collective sleep invites a reading beyond the uncanny: justice, too, seems to have fallen asleep, leaving abduction, murder and cannibalism unchecked.

Alam's supernatural intrusions deepen these social horrors without reducing them to straightforward allegories. In "Horse", a child recounts a dream in which he strikes a ghost on the head, only for cockroaches to pour out of its cracked skull, an image of grotesque absurdity delivered in the same matter-of-fact voice that carries the collection's more recognisable realities. In "The Cuckoo Keeps Calling", a rickshaw puller named Madhu is beaten by his owner's goons, while the police demand hefty bribes to turn a blind eye and dispose of his body, even though he is still alive. Meanwhile, in his village, three ghosts descend upon his wife and a potential lover, "eating" the woman while repeatedly smashing a brick against the man's skull. Madhu's ordeal exposes the familiar machinery of exploitation and institutional complicity; the ghosts bring another register of horror into the intimate space of village life, where brutality assumes a different, yet no less disturbing, form.

For the unsettling continuity between the grotesque and the ordinary to survive in English, the translation must retain not only the strangeness of Alam's imagery but also the linguistic and cultural textures that anchor his imagined world in everyday Bangladeshi life. Nadiya's translation does precisely this, resisting the impulse to explain away or smooth over the unfamiliar. In "Horse", Dadi remembers her husband as "pretty", retaining the gender-neutral quality of the Bengali "shundor" even when the English adjective sounds unexpected, while "horse eggs", the literal translation of the Bengali idiom for nonsense, resists the familiarity of the English equivalent, "bullshit". Elsewhere, in "The Hands of the Man of Light", the working-class pronunciation "'eady one two three" preserves the rhythms and social inflections of Banglish speech rather than standardising it as "Ready, set, go." Nadiya also lets the everyday vocabulary of Bangladesh enter English without extensive explanation: "chotpoti", "fuchka", "jhalmuri" and "singara" remain the names of familiar street foods, while "Dosto", "Chachu", "Dulabhai" and "Dadu" retain the nuances of address and intimacy that English equivalents might flatten. Even onomatopoeia resists complete assimilation, from "Hyat! Hyat! Hyat!" in "The Cuckoo Keeps Calling", used to shoo cows away, to "phat", the sound of a cleaver striking in "The Meat Market". These choices preserve the particularities of speech, sound and social life in the English text, allowing the language to retain its cultural specificity and historicity, even as the stories lay bare the cruelty embedded in Alam's world.

Ultimately, Alam's amalgamation of social realism, the grotesque and the supernatural exposes the cruelty that familiarity can render invisible, from the exploitation of the vulnerable to institutional complicity. Nadiya's translation preserves the cultural particularities of this world without smoothing away its strangeness. What remains with the reader is not simply the revulsion these stories provoke but the unsettling realisation that the wall between their imagined horrors and the realities we inhabit may be a porous membrane rather than a concrete stronghold.

Noora Shamsi Bahar *is a writer and second-year MFA candidate in Literary Translation at the University of Iowa.*

No color change

DHAKA THURSDAY OCTOBER 22, 2026, KARTIK 6, 1433 BS

SPORT



"He has many more years ahead to get opportunities. It's not as if he can just walk straight into the team right now because our openers have been scoring consistently and also won us the World Cup.

India captain **SHREYAS IYER** on Vaibhav Sooryanvanshi

Musical chairs, same old batting blunders

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's display in yesterday's crucial fixture against Afghanistan, with a place in the final on the line, once again exposed the batters' failure to take accountability. Shot selection and mentality pointed to persistent problems adapting to conditions, a weakness that often surfaces at multi-nation events.

Bangladesh have enjoyed a strong run of ODI series wins at home, beating West Indies, Pakistan, New Zealand and Australia in succession. But they have faltered against Zimbabwe in the UAE tri-series, while their batting against Afghanistan harked back to last October's 3-0 ODI series defeat in Abu Dhabi, which was marked by forgettable batting displays.

The Tigers reshuffled their batting order, dropping Soumya Sarkar from the opening slot and bringing in Saif Hassan, who had batted at four in the previous game. Tanzid Hasan Tamim failed to get off to a flying start, nicking one behind the stumps to depart for one and expose the top order's fragility.

Soumya came in at number three and perished for a first-ball duck, driving on the up against extra bounce and chopping the ball back on to his stumps. Najmul Hossain Shanto, who had been struggling, then nicked Azmatullah Omarzai through to the wicketkeeper. Skipper Tawhid Hridoy followed with an extraordinary dismissal, chipping an Omarzai delivery back to the bowler while attempting to flick it towards the leg side.

Parvez Hossain Emon was an unlikely choice at number four, despite having featured in that role in T20Is. ODI cricket is vastly different, but he showed good awareness in picking gaps and nudging the innings along with Saif. Yet neither is an established middle-order batter, underlining the dearth of options in that department.

Despite starring in a 93-run stand and facing 82 deliveries, Saif played a shot that matched neither the situation nor the delivery. He jumped down the wicket, only to top-edge Mohammad Nabi in the 32nd over and depart for 41. Mehidy Hasan Miraz, the last recognised batter at № 7, also fell to poor decision-making, attempting to pull a bouncer unsuited to the match situation. Mosaddek Hossain and Nurul Hasan Sohan have already circled in and out of the playing XI, while the batters' failure to adapt to the challenges of the middle overs surfaced again.

Emon remained effective during his 96-ball 70 before Bangladesh were bundled out for 160. His innings, however, will do little to resolve the lack of clarity over the Tigers' approach to building a 50-over innings.

Batters keep ignoring the cues and perishing before completing the job. The constant chopping and changing has begun to feel like a game of musical chairs, without fostering the accountability the team need.



Bangladesh batter Tanzid Tamim looks stunned after being dismissed by Afghanistan pacer Yamin Ahmadzai during their UAE ODI Tri-Series clash at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium yesterday. Needing to win by at least 41 runs in order to qualify for the final of a tournament also involving Zimbabwe, the Tigers suffered a familiar top-order collapse, slumping to 28 for four in just seven overs before eventually being bowled out for 160 runs in 41.2 overs. Afghanistan chased down the target in 35.3 overs losing only three wickets, sealing a seven-wicket victory and a place in Friday's final against Zimbabwe. PHOTO: **ACB**

U19 WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

Sylhet to host opening match, Chattogram semis and final

SPORTS REPORTER

Sylhet will host the opening match and Chattogram the semifinals and final of the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2027, which will be co-hosted by Bangladesh and Nepal from January 21 to February 6.

The third edition of the tournament, featuring 16 teams, will comprise 41 matches across four venues: Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, Bir Shrestha Shahid Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Cricket Stadium in Chattogram, TU International Cricket Stadium and Upper Mulpani International Cricket Ground in Kathmandu.

The opening day will feature four matches, including Bangladesh against the UAE. Co-hosts Nepal will begin their campaign against Ireland the following day, while defending champions India will face the West Indies in their opening fixture.

The group stage will run until January 26, with the qualifying teams advancing to the Super Six stage. The top two teams from each Super Six group will qualify for the semifinals, scheduled for February 4 in Chattogram.

The final will take place in Chattogram on February 6, with February 7 designated as the reserve day.

Why handball's brightest are giving up

RAMIN TALUKDER

In 2023, Mst Marfi, Runa Laila and Tania combined for 39 of Bangladesh's 46 goals as the under-17 women stunned India. Three years later, none has made it into the senior national setup.

A former Viqarunnisa Noon School and College student, one of the best in her class and a standout handball player, has already walked away. With no clear prospect of building a career in the sport beyond age-group level, she chose a safer path. She declined to be named.

Girls at English-medium schools such as Sunnydale and Scholastica often try handball for fun but leave when prospects look bleak. Those who stay frequently come from disadvantaged families, where financial hardship, social pressure and early marriage can make a sporting career difficult to sustain.

"If handball became an established profession, families could believe their daughters would be able to make a living from it."

DALIA AKTER
Assistant coach, Bangladesh women's handball team



PHOTO: **FIROZ AHMED**

Assistant coach Dalia Akter, who was part of the 2023 team, points to a lack of international exposure.

"How many international tournaments have we played since the 2022 Islamic Solidarity Games? Zero. Not a single one," she told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh hosted a junior event in 2023 but have not played abroad since and missed this year's Asian Youth Games. The senior side's last major outing was in Konya, Turkey, in late 2021 or early 2022, following appearances in 2019, 2018 and 2016.

"You cannot expect consistency by playing once or twice every few years. Progress takes several steps," Dalia said.

She cited Nepal's participation in the Asian Games and the Maldives' progress as examples of what sustained opportunities can offer. Without regular competition, she said, players lose interest and their performances suffer.

India's Bhawana Sharma, who will face Bangladesh in today's IHF Nations Trophy final, illustrated the difference a clearer pathway can make. She and her teammates live and train at an academy under coach Sachin Chaudhury and are preparing for the World Championship. India still struggle with regular salaries and adequate indoor facilities, but sporting achievements can open doors to jobs through sports quotas.

In Bangladesh, that prospect remains uncertain. Misty Khatun, a degree student from Jamalpur and a national-team player, said players receive no regular salaries, only payments when they compete. Camps cover food and accommodation, but once players return to their districts, there are few facilities to sustain their training. Families question the value of continuing, and some players are married off at 18 or 20, making a return difficult.

"We fail to perform as expected. We are the ones who fail," Misty said, before pointing to Himachal Pradesh, where year-round academy training supplies most of India's national team.

Federation secretary Salahuddin Ahmed said players receive Tk 500 a day during camps, alongside food and accommodation. Sixteen have been included in the government's sports allowance scheme, with support for others being considered. Service teams also employ eight or nine national players.

Dalia said 93 players, many from Dhaka, attended open trials but struggled against professionals from Ansar, police, Border Guard Bangladesh and the Village Defence Party. She called for school-level development beyond the capital, noting that only one of the 16 national players came from Dhaka.

"If handball became an established profession, families could believe their daughters would be able to make a living from it," she said.

For that former Viqarunnisa student, there is still no clear way to pursue education and handball together. Until the national jersey offers a viable livelihood, Bangladesh will keep losing talented girls, some back to their books and others to early marriage.

PSG end Barca's winning streak

Hansi Flick's Barcelona had travelled to France on a run of 11 consecutive wins this season, but saw that streak halted as defending champions PSG handed them a 4-2 defeat in a thrilling Champions League contest at the Parc des Princes yesterday. Desire Doue gave PSG a half-time lead before Xavi Espart equalised early in the second half. Lucas Hernandez, who kept Lamine Yamal quiet for much of the game after coming in for the absent Nuno Mendes at left-back, put PSG ahead once again. Yamal brought Barca back into the game in the 79th minute, but Vitinha and Fabian Ruiz scored late on to seal a Champions League thriller. Despite the win, PSG suffered injury setbacks involving wingers Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Ousmane Dembele, as well as skipper Marquinhos. Dembele and Marquinhos could be sidelined for several weeks, while Kvaratskhelia remains in doubt for the rest of the season with a torn ACL. Barca's Dani Olmo also suffered a thigh injury and is set to miss next week's El Clasico against Real Madrid. PHOTO: **REUTERS**



SHORT CORNER

Electronic timing promised for summer athletics

A total of 565 athletes from 57 organisations will compete in the Arafat Rahman Koko 18th National Summer Athletics Championship at the National Stadium in Dhaka from October 23 to 25, with organisers promising electronic timing for track events. The three-day competition will feature 40 events, including 22 men's and 18 women's disciplines. Of the participants, 431 are men and 134 women.

Debutant Rakib's five-for helps Khulna edge Chattogram

Debutant left-arm spinner Rakib Howlader claimed a five-wicket haul as Khulna Division edged Chattogram Division by 10 runs in the third round of the National Cricket League (NCL) 2026-27 in Sylhet on Wednesday to move to the top of the points table. Sylhet and Rajshahi Divisions also registered victories in their respective matches.

Dramatic collapse costs Bangladesh U-19s

Bangladesh U-19 team suffered their first defeat in the four-match YODI series after losing to Afghanistan by 43 runs at the Al Amerat Cricket Ground in Oman on Wednesday. Chasing a target of 238, Bangladesh were cruising at 157 for two in the 27th over, with Abdullah Al Muhi (61) and Kawser Ahmed (64) both scoring half-centuries. However, a dramatic collapse saw them lose their last eight wickets for just 37 runs before being bowled out for 194 in 38.2 overs.

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WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS
Pakistan ODI Tri-Series
England vs Sri Lanka
Live from 2:00 pm
SONY SPORTS 1

1st T20I
New Zealand vs India
Live from 1:00 pm
SONY SPORTS 1, 2, 5
Europa League
Live from 10:45 pm
Juventus vs Rennes
OFI vs Leverkusen
Live from 1:00 am (Friday)
Bournemouth vs Milan





PM'S JAPAN TOUR

Tokyo may push for re-inclusion of India in BIG-B

TASNIM MOHSIN

Japan is expected to push for India's re-inclusion in its Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B) initiative during Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's upcoming visit to Tokyo, in keeping with its broader vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), said foreign ministry officials.

Japan launched BIG-B in 2014 to promote industrial development and connectivity around the Bay of Bengal. In 2023, it proposed a broader initiative to strengthen economic links between Bangladesh and northeastern India.

Bangladesh-India ties have entered a rough patch following the fall of the Awami League government on August 5, 2024, a development that has affected Tokyo's strategic calculations in the region and complicated efforts to advance the initiative.

BIG-B is an important part of Japan's regional connectivity vision, with India playing a significant role.

"Japan has invested heavily in Northeast India. India, too, continues to engage with Bangladesh on cross-border connectivity projects aimed at facilitating the movement of goods between its northeastern states and the mainland. Both countries have an interest in connectivity that leads to the Bay of Bengal," said one of the officials.

Dhaka and Tokyo have kept the door open for India to join

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Students, teachers and civil servants take part in a rally in Athens, Greece, yesterday, to protest against the high cost of living, saying they face the same problems that sparked violent demonstrations in France at the weekend. PHOTO: AFP

NATORE CRASH

Bus had no fitness clearance for 5 months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

The RP Special bus involved in Tuesday's crash in Natore that killed 12 people had been operating for five months without a valid fitness certificate, according to police and the committee investigating the accident.

The bus routinely made the more than 500-kilometre journey from Barguna to Chapainawabganj overnight, leaving around 6:00pm and arriving around 6:00am.

It had about 40 passengers aboard when it collided head-on with a sand-laden truck near the Bonpara police outpost around 4:15am.

"We are investigating how it was allowed to run on this long route for so long without proper certification," said Md Alamgir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Bonpara Highway Police Station.

He said the bus's fitness certificate expired in May and the matter had been reported to the district administration's probe committee.

Bus owner Md Mintu Ali said he bought the Ashok Leyland vehicle about a year ago and initially rented it out for private tours and picnics. After obtaining a route permit, he started operating it on the Barguna-Chapainawabganj route four months ago.

He claimed he had applied to the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) to update the vehicle's documents but continued operating it because of delays in the process.

This correspondent could not reach BRTA officials despite repeated attempts to verify the claim.

Md Abul Hayat, additional district magistrate of Natore and head of the seven-member probe committee, confirmed to The Daily Star that the bus had been operating without fitness clearance for five months.

"We will check all papers, official documents, and safety requirements to identify the root cause. We will not make further comments until the investigation is complete," he said.



The mangled remains of the RP Special Paribahan bus. PHOTO: STAR

The committee visited the accident site yesterday.

Passengers alleged that the driver had been sleeping and that a helper or supervisor was driving when the crash occurred. Mintu denied the allegation, saying two drivers were aboard.

"Sohel Rana is an experienced driver, and the

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3

Magura Jubo Dal leader found dead at bus counter

Family alleges he was shot over political rivalry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

A local Jubo Dal leader was found dead at a bus counter in Magura town early yesterday, with a puncture wound to the back of his head.

The deceased was Md Saker Hossain, 40, senior joint convener of the Magura municipality unit of Jubo Dal, said District Jubo Dal Convener Mizanur Rahman.



Saker Hossain

Magura Superintendent of Police Molla Azad Hossain said police found the injury on the back of Saker's head but could not confirm whether it was caused by a gunshot.

"The exact cause of death will be determined after receiving the autopsy report," he said, adding that necessary legal action would follow the findings.

Saker, a resident of Beparipara in the town's Parnanduali area, worked as a counter master at the bus terminal.

His family said he had faced 10

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3

Five drones downed in eastern, Madina regions

Says Saudi coalition; Houthis deny drone launch, claim targeting Saudi position in Aden

AGENCIES

The Saudi-led coalition fighting Yemen's Houthis said yesterday it had intercepted five drones launched towards the kingdom, including in the Madina region.

"Four drones launched toward the Kingdom have been intercepted and destroyed," coalition spokesman Turki al-Malki posted on X, adding in a second post that the interceptions took place in Saudi Arabia's Eastern region as well as Madina.

Al-Malki, who did not specify who was behind the launches, later said another drone had been intercepted, also in the Eastern region.

Houthis said that they have not launched any drones towards Madina and have not conducted any military operations towards Saudi Arabia either, denying earlier comments from the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, reports Reuters.

However, the Iran-backed rebels said they attacked a Saudi position in the city of Aden yesterday, with smoke seen rising near the airport, in the third attack in a week on the seat of power of Yemen's Riyadh-backed government.

"Our armed forces were able to target the Saudi enemy's operations room in the Badr camp in Aden with a ballistic missile," Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said in a statement.

A police official in Aden earlier told AFP there had been a blast "caused by a Houthi missile", speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

- Smoke rises near Yemen's Aden airport, say witnesses
- KSA, Houthis silent on mediation offer: Iranian FM
- Egypt ready to provide KSA with support needed for security

Iran has not received a response from Saudi Arabia or Yemen's Houthis to its offer to help broker talks to end the fighting between them, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said in a television interview aired on Tuesday.

In the interview with Iraq's Al Ekhbariya TV, Araqchi also responded to the possibility of Egypt joining Saudi Arabia in the war against the Houthis.



Dust gathers on rows of machinery at Yeasin Jute Mills in Fatullah, Narayanganj, where more than 60 percent of the machines are out of operation, leaving the mill struggling to stay afloat. Once called the "golden fibre" for its economic value, jute has gradually lost its former glory. Bangladesh's jute industry is struggling to remain competitive as outdated machinery, low productivity and high energy costs drive up production expenses. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

IN FOCUS

Cop among 4 held for bike hijacking

Motorcycle was put up for sale on social media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

A police constable and three others were arrested in Chattogram on Tuesday night for allegedly hijacking a motorcycle and abducting its owner.

Police later recovered the motorcycle, along with two others, based on information from the suspects.

The arrestees are police constable Anik Das, 27; Wahid Md Jebel Hossain alias Anik Wahid, 39; Mohiuddin Selim, 52; and Wahed Nasir alias Diamond, 38.

Anik, who was attached to Rajarbagh Police Lines under the sports quota from Bandarban

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

BNP MP receives farming incentive cheque from PM

Party says he qualifies as farmer; Abu Sayeed cites family tradition

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*



Rajshahi-6 BNP lawmaker Abu Sayeed Chand was among 15 sugarcane farmers who received government incentive cheques from Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at a rally in Rajshahi on Tuesday, receiving Tk 12,500.

The prime minister launched a Tk 12 crore incentive programme for 38,970 sugarcane farmers at Haji Muhammad Mohsin Government High School Ground.

Masuma Akter Jahan, managing

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