DHAKA FRIDAY OCTOBER 23, 2026

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

# THE DAILY Star ON FRIDAY

SECOND EDITION



"It was a long day and a long night, I know for all the IT and security folks ... I've not seen anything like this in a long, long time."

Microsoft CEO **SATYA NADELLA** on worldwide hacking attempts




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# Gunshots shatter Sajek serenity

## 3,000 tourists evacuated from the valley amid clashes during blockade

**OUR CORRESPONDENT,** *Rangamati*

Around 3,000 tourists stranded on the road from Sajek in Rangamati were escorted to Khagrachhari yesterday after clashes between supporters of a blockade and law enforcers and then a reported gunfight between the UPDF and security forces.

The army and police jointly conducted the evacuation and five army personnel and two police members were injured in the clashes. No tourists were injured, Rangamati Superintendent of Police Muhammad Abdur Rakib said.

The blockade was enforced by the Sajek Gano Odhikar Rokkha Committee and the Sajek Karbari Association (village headmen's association) to press home three demands, including the removal of an armed group affiliated with the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS).

The protesters placed logs across the road at several points. Around 10:00am, they stopped a column of tourist vehicles returning from Sajek, the SP said at a press briefing at his office yesterday afternoon.

Heping Tripura, a lineman at the Sajek tourist centre, said tourists had left the valley around 8:30am in about 450 vehicles. The protesters intercepted those near Gangaram Bazar, around 25km from Sajek Valley.

According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) yesterday, army and police patrol teams tried to resolve the situation through dialogue. However, around 10:45am, the protesters, allegedly instigated by United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) members, began throwing brick chunks and stones at law enforcers and tourists.

Law enforcers then used truncheons to disperse the protesters and clear the road.

- ISPR says locals intimidated into joining blockade, used as human shields
- Police say five army personnel, two cops injured
- UPDF, protesters claim security forces opened fire
- 57 civilians allegedly injured in gunfire, truncheon charge
- New blockade called in two districts

ISPR, citing preliminary information, claimed that armed UPDF members around 11:00am fired 30-40 shots at law enforcers and tourists.

Army personnel returned fire in self-defence and to protect the tourists, forcing the armed men to flee, the statement said. The army and police then evacuated the stranded tourists.

The ISPR claimed that the blockade and ensuing violence were planned. It said UPDF members had intimidated locals into joining the blockade and used them as human shields.

It also claimed that some armed UPDF members had moved into tourist areas after coming under pressure from ongoing security operations in different parts of the Chattogram Hill Tracts.

In a statement yesterday, UPDF spokesperson Angya Marma described reports of a gunfight between the army and an armed group in Sajek as "completely false and fabricated".

He said the group found no evidence of a gunfight after speaking to locals. Instead, he alleged, security personnel fired shots in different directions to break up a peaceful road blockade by locals demanding the removal of an armed group affiliated with the PCJSS Santu faction.

Angya condemned what he described as attacks, truncheon charges, vandalism of homes and intimidation of peaceful protesters. He urged the authorities to meet the locals' demands, withdraw the armed members of the PCJSS Santu group from Sajek and take action against them.

Babudhan Chakma, convener of the Sajek Gano Odhikar Rokkha Committee, which enforced the blockade, also disputed the security forces' account.

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PHOTO: **COLLECTED**

**Army and policemen escorting stranded tourists from Sajek Valley are confronted by members of two regional organisations enforcing a blockade in the Ujobazar (Gangaram) area of Rangamati's Baghaichhari yesterday morning. Shortly after the personnel dispersed the demonstrators and escorted the tourists to Khagrachhari, reports emerged about an exchange of gunfire between local armed groups and law enforcers and security personnel.**

# Govt rings alarm over global cyber security flaws

## BB downs its website for safety

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The national cybersecurity response team has warned of a high risk of hacking and advised government agencies, financial institutions, telecom operators and other organisations to identify vulnerable systems and apply security updates immediately.

Two critical flaws in PHP, software used to run a large share of the world's websites, could allow hackers to run malicious code on web servers without logging in, said Bangladesh Government Computer Incident Response Team (BGD e-GOV CIRT), which operates under the ICT Division's Bangladesh Computer Council, in an advisory yesterday.

The warning comes as global firms and governments rushed on Thursday to patch critical flaws in the PHP programming language that underpins much of the internet, as a cloud firm reported millions of hacking attempts after vulnerabilities were disclosed, according to Reuters.

The push came after governments in Europe and elsewhere took websites

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# Govt plans Tk 21,900cr digital makeover for schools

## 2 projects to cover half the secondary, higher secondary schools; experts recall past failures, stress better planning

- Teachers to receive training on digital teaching methods
- Interactive digital panels to be installed in 100,000 classrooms
- 3,000 classrooms to be constructed thru vertical expansion model
- 2,100 schools to get ICT and AI laboratories
- Both projects to be implemented from Jan 2027 to Dec 2031




**MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR** *and* **ARAFAT RAHAMAN**

In a major push to expand digital learning, the government plans to invest nearly Tk 21,900 crore in two major projects to modernise classrooms at the secondary and higher secondary levels, enhance teaching quality and prepare students for a world increasingly shaped by technology.

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**Dengue patients receive treatment on corridor floors at Mugda Medical College Hospital as a rising number of cases strains the hospital. Four people died and 1,512 others were hospitalised with dengue in the 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services. The death toll of this year so far is 368, and cases 118,502.** PHOTO: **MEHEDI HASAN**

# Japan to arrange $6.35b in private investment

## Reports Nikkei; money to flow over 5 years

**DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT**

Japan is expected to arrange 1 trillion yen ($6.35 billion) in private-sector investment in Bangladesh over the next five years, with the commitment set to be reflected in a joint statement during Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's upcoming visit to Tokyo, Japanese newspaper Nikkei reported yesterday.

According to the foreign ministries of the two countries, Tarique is scheduled to visit Japan from October 26 to 29. During the visit, Bangladesh and Japan are expected to elevate their existing strategic partnership.

A meeting between Tarique and his Japanese counterpart Sanae Takaichi is slated for October 27.

The investments are expected to flow into the automobile and other manufacturing industries, as well as the construction of energy facilities, Nikkei reported.

The investment plan is also expected to involve companies operating in the Bangladesh Special Economic Zone, which is being developed with the involvement of Japanese trading house Sumitomo Corp, the report said.

According to Nikkei, Japan aims to expand economic cooperation with Bangladesh while

**The investments are expected to flow into the automobile and other manufacturing industries, as well as the construction of energy facilities.**

reducing China's influence in the country. China is Bangladesh's largest source of imports, the report noted.

Since the July 2024 uprising, Bangladesh has been seeking investment and cooperation in infrastructure development and other sectors, it added.

The report also said a delegation of Japanese businesses would visit Bangladesh soon. A public-private dialogue on economic cooperation and investment is planned during the visit.

Bangladesh and Japan signed an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in February. Bangladesh's competitive labour costs and favourable manufacturing environment make

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# Jubo Dal leader hacked to death in Narayanganj

**OUR CORRESPONDENT,**
*Narayanganj*

A local Jubo Dal leader was hacked to death by unidentified assailants when he was returning home from his pharmacy in the district's Sonargaon upazila on Wednesday night.

The victim, Fakir Zahir Rahman, 40, was a joint convener of Araihazar upazila Jubo Dal and president of its Kalapaharia union unit, police said.

Mohammad Abdul Barik, officer-in-charge of Sonargaon Police Station, said Zahir came under attack around 10:00pm in the Char Kishoreganj area of Sonargaon upazila.

Zahir ran a pharmacy in the Char Kishoreganj area but lived in a rented house in neighbouring Munshiganj Sadar upazila.

He died while undergoing treatment at a Munshiganj hospital.

Police are investigating the killing, said OC Barik, adding that no case has yet been filed in connection with the incident.



**Prime Minister Tarique Rahman waves from a boat to people gathered along the riverbank to welcome him on his arrival in Mongla, Bagerhat, yesterday afternoon. Tarique inspected Mongla Port, the Sundarbans and the site of a proposed economic zone in Bagerhat during his visit to the southwestern region.** PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Envoy to Japan to be kept in Dhaka during PM's visit

**DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT**



**Md Daud Ali**

Bangladesh's Ambassador to Japan Md Daud Ali will remain in Dhaka during Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's visit to Japan from October 26 to 29 following a government decision, a foreign ministry official said.

Meanwhile, Md Nazrul Islam, secretary for bilateral affairs at the foreign ministry, has been sent to Tokyo to oversee diplomatic matters and coordinate arrangements for the visit.

An official familiar with the developments, seeking anonymity, said the government decided to send Nazrul to Tokyo on October 19.

"The order recalling the ambassador was signed on October 15. He was asked to be in Dhaka within two days," the official said.

Daud will remain in Dhaka until the prime minister's visit ends, the official added.

Diplomatic sources said Nazrul would stay in Tokyo throughout the visit, taking the lead in bilateral coordination and providing diplomatic support.

Foreign ministry officials said Daud was recalled to Dhaka for consultations on the visit. However, several senior officials, also speaking on condition of anonymity, said the ambassador

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# Saudi downs drones in Riyadh, Madinah areas

## Four killed in Houthi attacks on Dammam airport, Aramco oilfield; two Bangladeshis among several injured

**STAR REPORT**

Saudi Arabia yesterday said it downed drones in the areas of Riyadh and the holy city of Madinah, as Yemen's Houthis carry out daily attacks on the kingdom.

"Interception and destruction of four drones in the regions of Riyadh and Madinah," said Turki Al-Malki in a post on X, the spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition fighting the Iran-backed group.

Meanwhile, two people were killed and several others, including two Bangladeshis, were injured in a separate Houthi attack on Dammam airport on Wednesday evening, Saudi authorities said yesterday.

Those killed at the King Fahd International Airport in Dammam were a Saudi citizen and an Indian national.

The two injured Bangladeshis, identified as Sajal Chandra Das of Cumilla and Mohammad Abdur Rahim of Noakhali, are undergoing treatment at Saudi German Hospital in Dammam, Bangladesh Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment said yesterday.

According to the ministry, both lost consciousness due to heat and smoke following the attack but sustained no visible physical injuries.

Two more people were killed by falling debris after Saudi air defences intercepted a drone that was attempting to hit a facility at Saudi Aramco's Shaybah oilfield on Wednesday evening, the Saudi energy ministry said.

The incident caused a fire in a vehicle outside the perimeter of Saudi Aramco's Shaybah oilfield facility but did not affect operations at the field, the ministry said, citing an official source. Saudi Aramco has instructed staff to evacuate its headquarters in Dhahran and work remotely, six sources with knowledge of the matter said.

Meanwhile, the US State Department has ordered some diplomats and family members to depart from its missions in Saudi Arabia and plans to withdraw family members from a number of other US missions in the region, US officials said.

In a separate development, Yemen's Houthis said yesterday that they were attempting to rescue a boat carrying 14 Indians near Zuqar island in the Red Sea, alleging that it was targeted by Saudi Arabia.

A Houthi maritime blockade in the Red Sea is also threatening oil shipments from Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest exporter of crude.

The Houthi attacks follow the collapse in July of a years-long truce in Yemen's civil war, where the Iran-backed group is fighting the government supported by a Saudi-led coalition.

The Houthis declared a maritime blockade of Saudi Arabia and began hitting its ships, territory and oil facilities, before launching a major offensive in September in which they seized government-held territory along the Red Sea coast.

In response, the Saudi air force has frequently targeted areas under Houthi control, which includes much of impoverished Yemen.

**HOUTHI ATTACKS**

# No Biman flights to Riyadh till Oct 31

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has suspended all flights from Dhaka to Dammam scheduled for October 23, 24 and 25 following an attack on King Fahd International Airport in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday night.

The national flag carrier has also suspended all Dhaka–Riyadh flights until October 31 due to ongoing air attacks, citing passenger safety.

In a press release yesterday, Biman said revised schedules and further decisions on the suspended flights would be announced later.

**Restrictions at Saudi Arabian airports have affected 135 flights involving Bangladesh and disrupted travel for 20,672 passengers.**

Just a day earlier, Biman had announced plans to operate a Riyadh flight later this month and continue daily Dammam services until October 26.

Flights from Dhaka to Jeddah and Madinah will continue as scheduled, the airline said.

Passengers affected by the Dammam and Riyadh suspensions may travel through the Jeddah and Madinah airports, subject to seat availability.

Biman advised passengers to contact its nearest sales offices for ticketing and travel information.

Saudi Arabia yesterday said it downed drones in the areas of Riyadh and the holy city of Madina, as Yemen's

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# Govt plans Tk 21,900cr

FROM PAGE 1

According to proposals by the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), the projects will cover half of the 20,767 secondary and higher secondary educational institutions and be implemented between January 2027 and December 2031.

"The initiatives are intended to foster students' interest in technology and give them hands-on support in developing their own projects," said Shefatul Islam, research officer at DSHE's Planning and Development Wing.

Conventional classroom teaching often struggles to retain students' attention, while existing facilities are not adequately equipped to meet evolving skill requirements, he said.

The larger of the two projects, titled "Enhancing Technological Capacity and Establishing Smart Learning Environment in Secondary and Higher Secondary Educational Institutions", will cost Tk 18,505 crore. It seeks to introduce technology-based teaching and learning in schools.

The second project, the NextGen Secondary Education Program (NGEP), will involve Tk 3,397 crore, with a focus on teacher training, classroom expansion and improved facilities for science, technology and practical learning.

Mir Zahida Naznin, DSHE director (Planning and Development), said the proposal for NGEP is now with the Planning Commission for approval after the completion of a feasibility study.

The proposal for the Tk 18,505-crore project is undergoing a feasibility study, she told this newspaper recently.

Naznin said the new initiative would be different from previous investments in digital and multimedia classrooms.

The authorities will consider the expansion of existing infrastructure, particularly whether buildings can be expanded vertically to accommodate three additional rooms for laboratories, she added.

Bangladesh has around 328,000 teachers for more than 89 lakh students in 20,767 secondary and higher secondary educational institutions across the country, shows data from Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS).

Meanwhile, several educationists have stressed the need for better planning and a proper assessment of institutional readiness before large-scale projects are rolled out.

They said that equipping schools with computers, high-speed internet and interactive digital panels will not automatically improve the quality of education. The main challenge will be to ensure that substantial investments translate into better teaching and learning, rather than adding equipment and infrastructure to schools.

They noted that previous initiatives to introduce technology in schools had faced serious implementation challenges.

One such initiative was the ICT for Education Project, which DSHE launched more than a decade ago in two phases. In the first phase, multimedia equipment worth over Tk 294 crore was provided to 23,331 educational institutions in 2015.

Three years later, an evaluation by the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) found that 24 percent of surveyed teachers had unusable laptops, 14 percent had unusable projectors, and 56 percent said the training they received did not adequately prepare them to develop multimedia content.

The second phase, launched in 2016, aimed to equip 36,084 classrooms. The Tk 1,348-crore project, originally scheduled for completion by June 2020, received four deadline extensions and most recently missed its revised completion target of June 2026.

The government is now considering revising and reviving the project, said education officials.

Another government initiative that fell far short of expectations was the Tk 299-crore Sheikh Russel Digital Lab Project, launched by the ICT Division in 2014 to establish laboratories in schools in two phases.

In the first phase, 4,001 laboratories were set up between 2015 and 2019 at a revised cost of Tk 398 crore.

The second phase, approved in 2020 at a cost of Tk 939 crore, sought to establish another 5,000 laboratories and advanced digital learning facilities at 300 selected schools, labelled as Schools of Future.

In 2025, a white paper commissioned by the interim government found that the laboratories had serious shortcomings, including non-functional equipment, inadequate maintenance, and the selection of schools was politically motivated.

When contacted, M Niaz Asadullah, who chaired the white paper taskforce, said equipment had been supplied without functioning software and teachers were not properly trained to operate digital devices.

Niaz, a professor of economics at Dhaka University, further said his analysis of SSC results from 2021 to 2023 found no significant improvement in pass rates or GPA-5 outcomes in schools with digital labs.

Regarding the latest government move, he said, "Before committing Tk 21,900 crore, the government must explain how these projects will improve learning."

He urged the government to carry out an independent evaluation, put in place a transparent procurement mechanism and set aside funds for maintenance before making investments.

Samir Ranjan Nath, programme head at the BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University, said the government should first examine whether earlier investments in computers, laboratory facilities and teacher training had changed teachers' attitudes and improved classroom learning.

He argued that the government should prioritise the use of equipment already supplied to schools instead of launching new projects. Upazila education officials could be tasked with monitoring the use of digital devices.

Samir also said some large projects were designed primarily to spend public money rather than meet educational needs. "Irregularities in public procurement are a long-standing disease in this country."

According to experts, project implementation is sometimes hampered by a section of teachers' reluctance to use digital devices.

A 2020-21 BANBEIS study covering 384 secondary schools and madrasas found that of the 1,655 ICT devices recorded, 215 remained unused and 248 were out of order.

Samir said some teachers developed negative attitudes towards technology after observing students' misuse of digital devices, particularly mobile phones, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers and families also struggled to guide students towards appropriate use of technology during that period.

Another significant challenge in implementing technology-driven projects is the persistent rural-urban gap in internet access.

According to the ICT Access and Use by Households and Individuals Survey 2024-25, around 65 percent of urban households had internet access at home against 50.5 percent in rural areas. The gap is wider in computer ownership as 21.1 percent of urban households owned a computer, compared with 3.6 percent of rural households.

**BRINGING TECHNOLOGY INTO CLASSROOMS**

The Tk 18,505-crore project seeks to reduce the digital divide between urban and rural students by giving them equal access to technology-based education.

Interactive digital panels will be installed in 100,000 classrooms across 10,000 educational institutions. Each institution will receive broadband connectivity with a speed of 100 megabits per second (Mbps).

The project proposal includes the introduction of digital identification numbers and smart cards for teachers and students, and the creation of an online platform for organising teaching and learning activities and a digital library for storing educational materials.

Teachers will receive tablet computers and training in digital pedagogy, which goes beyond the simple use of computers and other devices. It involves using digital tools to make lessons more engaging, improve teaching methods and better understand students' learning needs, according to DSHE officials.

**EXPANSION OF CLASSROOMS, LAB FACILITIES**

The Tk 3,397-crore NGEP project seeks to improve the learning environment, strengthen teachers' professional skills and expand access to science and technology education.

The government will provide Tk 566.09 crore and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Tk 2,662 crore for the project. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) will offer additional support.

Under the project, training on assessment methods and digital content development will be given to 369,643 teachers and education administrators.

At least 3,000 classrooms will be constructed in 1,000 upazila-level schools using a vertical expansion model, the proposal said.

The project aims to strengthen science and technology education through specialised facilities. At least 2,100 ICT and artificial intelligence laboratories will be set up in 1,050 secondary schools, featuring learning zones for robotics, 3D printing, machine learning and advanced computing.

Teachers' common rooms will be modernised, science laboratories upgraded, and laboratory equipment and furniture provided to 1,050 schools, said the proposal.

# Gunshots shatter Sajek serenity

FROM PAGE 1

Speaking to The Daily Star, he alleged that law enforcers first used truncheons and then threw brick chunks and stones at protesters.

"When the protesters refused to leave, the law enforcement personnel opened fire on them. Now, the law enforcement agencies are blaming the protesters," he said.

He claimed that more than 57 civilians had been injured by truncheon charges and gunfire by security forces and that the number could rise. He also alleged that law enforcers were preventing the injured from being taken to hospitals.Residents of Ujo Bazar and several people living in nearby areas had also been forced to leave their homes and shops, he said.

Tourist Sanjida Akter told The Daily Star that the blockade worried them.

"Just before evening on Wednesday, we suddenly heard that an organisation had called a road blockade. On our way back today [Thursday], the protesters stopped our vehicles. Despite the fear and anxiety, we managed to reach Khagrachhari safely. I will feel relieved when we reach home in Dhaka by bus tonight [Thursday]," she said.

The two organisations announced an indefinite blockade of the road to Sajek tourist centre on Wednesday afternoon. Following the announcement, the district administration suspended tourist travel to the valley from that evening and asked tourists to leave by 4:00pm yesterday.

Jugeshwar Tripura, an employee of Sampari Guest House in Sajek, said he was returning home after the tourist centre was declared closed.

"When we reached Ujo Bazar, we saw that the vehicles had been stopped. Later, members of the law enforcement agencies escorted our vehicles and brought us here," he said.

Babudhan Chakma earlier told The Daily Star that their three demands were the removal of armed PCJSS members from Sajek, an end to death threats against innocent people, and a halt to searches of ordinary people's homes by law enforcement agencies.

The organisations had first enforced an indefinite blockade on October 11. They later presented their demands to the administration and suspended the blockade for two days after receiving assurances. When the demands remained unmet, they resumed the blockade on October 15.

The blockade was suspended during Durga Puja but has now resumed, with the organisations saying their demands remain unmet.

Contacted, Nagendra Chakma, general secretary of the PCJSS Rangamati district unit, dismissed the allegations against his organisation as baseless.

"The PCJSS has no activities in Sajek and is not involved in the incidents taking place there," he said.

Meanwhile, another indigenous community organisation, Chhatra Janata Sangram Parishad, called a half-day blockade in Rangamati and Khagrachhari on Saturday.

In a press release issued yesterday, the organisation said it called the blockade in protest against attacks, truncheon charges and vandalism during yesterday's blockade in Sajek.

Opposition Leader and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman expressed concern over the tourists being stranded and reports of a gunfight.

In a post on his verified Facebook page around 2:15pm yesterday, he asked, "What is happening centring Sajek in Baghaichari upazila of Rangamati district?

"Instead of chasing false intelligence, clear steps need to be taken in this regard based on accurate intelligence.

"No one has the right to play with the lives of ordinary citizens. Take appropriate action while there is still time," he added.

# Govt rings alarm

FROM PAGE 1

offline as a precaution on Wednesday while website operators scrambled to secure systems running the software.

The emergency shutdowns of banking, airline, rail, tax and government services from Tokyo to Helsinki mark one of the most dramatic tests of the decades-old programming tools that keep the web running, exposing how deeply governments and companies depend on code that few people understand.

Cloudflare, a company that helps protect websites from cyberattacks, reported millions of attempts to exploit the vulnerabilities following their public disclosure.

As a precaution, Bangladesh Bank (BB), the country's central bank, has taken down its website since noon yesterday following a global cybersecurity alert, its spokesperson, Arief Hossain Khan, told The Daily Star.

He said the central bank's IT department was working on the issue but did not say when the website would be restored.

The CIRT advisory states that the flaws could allow an attacker to "execute code on a web server without first authenticating to the application".

The agency identified government portals, public-facing application programming interfaces (APIs), administrative systems and e-commerce platforms as examples of applications that may be affected.

It urged organisations to "inventory all PHP runtimes and prioritise public-facing systems for immediate patching", according to the advisory. This means identifying all PHP installations across their systems and prioritising those accessible through the internet for security updates.

According to the CIRT advisory, the two PHP vulnerabilities, collectively known as PHP2Shell, are identified as CVE-2026-109618 and CVE-2026-109619. They could allow attackers to run their own commands on affected servers without first logging in, potentially exposing stored information or disrupting online services.

PHP is a programming language that works behind the scenes of websites, processing requests, retrieving information from databases and delivering content to users. It underpins many online services, including websites built with platforms such as WordPress and Drupal.



## PM's Mongla visit raises dev hopes for southwest

**UNB,** *Khulna*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday inspected Mongla Port, the Sundarbans and the site of a proposed economic zone in Bagerhat, raising hopes for investment and development in the southwestern region.

He left Dhaka by helicopter around 9:00am and flew over parts of the Sundarbans, including Hiron Point, before landing at Nalian Secondary School ground in Dakop upazila of Khulna around 10:30am.

The premier then travelled by waterway to BNS Mongla, a Bangladesh Navy facility, where he met Navy, port and local administration officials.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed, Finance Minister

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**Pedestrians cross the railway tracks near Kuril Bus Stand on Airport Road in Dhaka yesterday, ignoring a warning sign about a dangerous bend ahead and a ban on crossing or walking along the tracks. Despite the risks, many continue to use the tracks as a shortcut, disregarding railway safety rules.**

PHOTO: **PALASH KHAN**

# 407 foreigners in Bangladesh jails, 172 await return

**DIPAN NANDY**

At least 407 foreign nationals from 15 countries are currently held in prisons across Bangladesh, including 172 who have completed their sentences or are otherwise eligible for release but remain behind bars awaiting repatriation.

Most are Indian and Myanmar nationals, according to prison authorities.

Of the 407 prisoners, 44 are convicts, 191 are undertrial prisoners, and 172 are awaiting repatriation. None of the convicts has been sentenced to death, prison sources said.

- 238 Indians, 133 Myanmar nationals in jail
- 44 convicts, 191 undertrial prisoners
- 168 Indians await repatriation, say jail authorities
- Nationality verification delays repatriation

India accounts for the largest number, with 238 prisoners, including 168 who have completed their sentences but remain detained because arrangements for their return have yet to be completed.

Myanmar has the second-highest number, with 133 prisoners, including 33 of the 44 convicts. Only one Myanmar national is awaiting repatriation.

The remaining prisoners include six Nigerians; three each from Pakistan and Malaysia; two each from Tanzania and Peru; and one each from Georgia, the Bahamas, Belarus, Guyana, Congo, Ethiopia and Thailand.

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## Curbs on secretariat visitor access on cards

### PM asks officials to review visiting hours, entry rules

**BAHARAM KHAN**

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has asked officials to consider reducing visitor numbers and shortening visiting hours at the secretariat after noticing large crowds during recent visits to ministries.

At least three sources at the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Home Affairs confirmed the development to The Daily Star.

Visitor entry is currently barred on Mondays and Thursdays. However, on Thursday, October 15, the prime minister noticed large gatherings while descending from the 14th floor of Building 6 after inspecting the environment ministry.

He then summoned the home ministry's deputy secretary (security), the deputy commissioner of police and the additional deputy commissioner responsible for secretariat security to his office in the complex.

After being briefed on visitor management, the premier instructed them to submit a proposal through the home ministry.

This correspondent spoke to at least five officials, including two who briefed the prime minister.

One official, requesting anonymity, said internal discussions were underway and the home ministry would submit a proposal after the Puja holidays.

"The prime minister asked us to consider limiting visiting hours to 2:00pm-4:00pm. We are also considering reducing visitor access to two days a week."



**Visitor entry is currently barred on Mondays and Thursdays. However, on Thursday, October 15, the prime minister noticed large gatherings while descending from the 14th floor of Building 6 after inspecting the environment ministry.**

Visiting hours currently run from 12:00pm to 4:00pm.

Another official said cancelling all temporary passes was also under consideration, but a decision would follow a review of the arrangements.

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# Rising heat takes a toll on maternal, child health

Research links extreme heat to higher miscarriage risk, newborn illnesses



**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Strengthen heat-health action plans
- Improve heatwave early-warning systems
- Monitor pregnancy, newborn complications
- Prepare hospitals for heat-related emergencies

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Extreme heat is posing growing health risks to pregnant women, newborns and children, with research linking high temperatures to premature births and increased heatwave exposure among infants, four UN agencies warned yesterday.

The World Health Organization (WHO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Unicef and UNFPA jointly launched the first set of priority indicators to help countries monitor these risks and strengthen their response.

According to the WHO, research has linked extreme heat to 26 percent higher odds of preterm birth.

Babies under one year experienced 389 percent more heatwave days in 2024 than during the 1986-2005 baseline period, while an estimated 1.5 billion children worldwide face increasingly frequent, prolonged or severe heatwaves.

In Bangladesh, an icddr,b study of 22,624 pregnancy outcomes in Chakaria, Cox's Bazar, between 2012 and 2020 found 25 percent higher adjusted odds of miscarriage at average temperatures of 28°C-32°C compared with 16°C-21°C.

Miscarriages accounted for 11.2 percent of outcomes in the higher-temperature group, against 9.2 percent in the lower-temperature group. The study established an association, not causation.

A 2024 Unicef report cited Bangladeshi research showing that women giving birth on hot days were 14 percent more likely to have newborns with neonatal illnesses.

Climate Central found that Bangladesh experienced an average of 34 days annually of potentially dangerous heat for pregnant women between 2020 and 2024, with climate change adding an estimated seven days a year. In Chattogram, the estimated increase was 30 days.

The analysis counted days when temperatures exceeded levels associated with increased risks of premature birth.

The new 56-page framework recommends monitoring preterm births, stillbirths, low birthweight, pregnancy-related hypertension, child deaths and health facility visits during

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## IN BRIEF

### SAUDI EXECUTIONS

### HRSS seeks probe into ministries' roles

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) has demanded an independent investigation into the roles of Bangladesh's foreign affairs and expatriates' welfare ministries and diplomatic missions following the execution of two Bangladeshi nationals in Saudi Arabia on October 14.

In a statement yesterday, signed by HRSS Executive Director Ejazul Islam, the rights organisation said the reported lack of prior notification to Bangladeshi authorities raised serious concerns about the country's consular protection system.

The two individuals, identified as Nazrul Islam Abdul Basir and Suety Akhter (Sweety Akhtar,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

### Chhatra Dal leader held over 'extortion'

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The Detective Branch (DB) arrested Nayan Hossain, convener of Adabor thana Chhatra Dal, on Wednesday for allegedly obstructing sewerage and drainage development work by the city corporation and demanding extortion money from building owners in the capital's Adabor area.

Tejgaon DB Deputy Commissioner Md Ziauddin confirmed the arrest to the media yesterday.

Adabor Police Station Officer-in-Charge Zahidur Rahman said he had heard about Nayan's arrest but that the latter had not yet been handed over to the police station.

He also said he was unaware of the specific case in connection with which Nayan was arrested.

## Students who failed SSC demand retests by Dec

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Students who failed this year's Secondary School Certificate examinations have demanded supplementary exams by the end of 2026, allowing those who pass to enrol in Class XI without losing an academic year.

If the exams cannot be held this year, they want the government to allow them to enrol in college immediately while preparing for supplementary exams next year.

The demands were made at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday under the banner of SSC 2026 Students' Rights Movement Bangladesh.

Students argued that one failed examination should not deny students another chance to prove themselves.

Of the 18,29,485 candidates who sat this year's SSC and equivalent examinations, 6,90,608, or 37.75 percent, failed, according to results published on August 10. Another 4,585 passed following re-scrutiny in September.

On October 10, Prime Minister's Adviser on Education Mahdi Amin said the government was considering allowing students to retake failed subjects within three months instead of waiting a year, but cautioned that implementing the system this year could be difficult.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



**Women gather jute fibre laid out to dry under the sun at Lata Mor in Khulna's Aranghata area yesterday. Once dried, the fibre is processed into yarn to make sacks used for storing and transporting agricultural produce and food grains.**

PHOTO: **HABIBUR RAHMAN**

## 7 Qawmi parties to work together under Hefazat guidance

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Seven Qawmi madrasa-based political parties have decided to work together under the guidance of Hefazat-e-Islam, although their leaders are reluctant to describe the initiative as a political alliance at this stage.

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Hefazat Secretary General Sajidur Rahman at Makhjanul Ulum Madrasa in Khilgaon yesterday. Three representatives from each of the seven parties and three Hefazat leaders attended the meeting.

The parties are Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Khelafat Majlis, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Islami Oikya Jote (Razi), Nezame Islam Party and Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon.

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Secretary General Maulana Jalaluddin Ahmad told The Daily Star, "The seven like-minded Islamic parties have decided to move forward together for the welfare of the country, its people and Islam. We will work together on programmes, statements and take positions on various issues."

He said the parties had previously worked under a common platform and now wanted to resume cooperation along similar lines.

"The decision by these seven parties to work together does not mean that parties

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

# Man, homemaker killed hours apart in Khulna

**OUR CORRESPONDENT,** *Khulna*

A 32-year-old man was shot dead in Khulna city early yesterday, while a 25-year-old homemaker was hacked and shot dead in a separate incident in the evening.

Tahedul Islam Tushar was shot in the back near Ansar Ali Goli in Purba Baniakhhamar around 5:30am, said Sub-Inspector Md Shah Alam of Khulna Sadar Police Station.

Quoting locals, Shah Alam said a scuffle broke out among several young men near Khademul Ulum Madrasa. Some pulled out firearms and opened fire, killing Tushar on the spot.

Police recovered a motorcycle and two bullet casings and sent his body to Khulna Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

Shah Alam said Tushar belonged to a gang led by Palash, a top criminal from Khulna now in jail, and was killed by rivals.

Officer-in-Charge Md Lokmon Hossain said Tushar had entered an area controlled by rival groups, whose members spotted him and opened fire.

Police identified the suspects and launched an operation to arrest them, he added.

According to the OC, Tushar faced two cases involving firearms offences and extortion allegations. He was produced before a court in an arms-related case on June 7 and later released on bail.

In the second incident, Khushi, 25, wife of Sumon Sardar, also known as "Blade Babu", was hacked and shot dead in Jindapara of the city's Labanchora area around 6:45pm.

Police and locals said the couple were allegedly involved in drug trading and had a long-standing feud with a local gang over the narcotics trade.

Two assailants arrived on a motorcycle, and one hacked and shot Khushi before fleeing, they said.

Locals rushed her to Khulna Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

Labanchora Police Station OC Syed Mosharef Hossain said police visited the scene and launched drives to arrest the attackers.



**Friends Mijarul and Nayan herd their flock of 1,400 ducks across a muddy field at Purba Dahar Hapania Mor in Netrokona. The two rear ducks for both meat and eggs, selling each duck for around Tk 600-700. Their flock produces around 800 eggs daily, which sell for around Tk 18 each. Like them, many others in the area are turning to duck farming to become financially independent.**

PHOTO: **PRABIR DAS**



## Four more die of dengue, 1,512 get hospitalised

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

At least four people died of dengue and 1,512 others were hospitalised with the viral disease in the 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Of the four deaths, two were reported in Mymensingh division and one each in DNCC and DSCC.

With the latest fatalities and cases, the country's dengue death toll has risen to 368, while the total number of cases has reached 118,502.

Currently, 6,023 dengue patients are undergoing treatment at hospitals across the country.

## Couple dies after gas cylinder blast in Gazipur

**OUR CORRESPONDENT,** *Gazipur*

A couple died last night after suffering severe burns in a gas cylinder explosion at their home in Tongi on Wednesday.

The deceased were identified as Md Lalchan, 60, and Nasima Begum, 50, both garment workers.

Their daughter, Tanisa Akter, 16, is undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in Dhaka.

The explosion occurred around 6:00am in the Mudafa area of Tongi's Cherag Ali, reportedly due to a gas cylinder leak. The three were rescued and taken to the burn institute around 7:30am.

Dr Sultan Mahmud Shikder, a resident physician at the institute, said Lalchan had suffered burns to 95 percent of his body, Nasima 85 percent and Tanisa 86 percent.

Md Arifur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Tongi West Police Station, said the explosion was caused by a gas cylinder leak.

# Jibanananda lives on in every verse

## Barishal remembers its beloved poet on his 72nd death anniversary



FILE VISUAL: **AFSANA MIM**

**OUR CORRESPONDENT,** *Barishal*

The rivers, landscapes and natural beauty of Bengal, immortalised in the verses of poet Jibanananda Das, remain deeply intertwined with his birthplace, Barishal.

Yesterday, the city remembered one of Bangla literature's foremost modern poets on his 72nd death anniversary through floral tributes, discussions and exhibitions of his work.

Members of Pragati Lekhak Sangha and cultural activists placed wreaths at the poet's mural at the memorial auditorium on his ancestral homestead in Barishal in the morning.

Piyush Bandyopadhyay, secretary of the organisation, attended the programme alongside members of various cultural organisations.

In neighbouring Jhalakathi, a discussion meeting and an exhibition of the poet's books were held at Narayan Library in the afternoon.

In Barishal, Nilu Monu Trust and Bonolota Book Cafe also organised exhibitions featuring his published works.

Born in Barishal on February 17, 1899, Jibanananda Das carved out a distinctive place in modern Bangla poetry through his evocative portrayal of Bengal's landscapes, rivers and rural life.

His notable poetic works are "Jhora Palok", "Dhushor Pandulipi", "Bonolota Sen", "Mohaprithibi", "Shaat-ti Tarar Timir", "Shrestho Kobita" and "Ruposhi Bangla".

The poet, who taught English at Brojomuhun College in Barishal for many years, died in Kolkata on October 22, 1954, after sustaining injuries in a tram accident.

## Two killed as bus hits three-wheeler on Dhaka-Aricha highway

**OUR CORRESPONDENT,** *Manikgaj*

Two people were killed and two others critically injured when a bus collided with a battery-run auto-rickshaw on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Manikganj's Shibalaya upazila yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Yasin, 20, and Babul, 28, both from Mahali village in Ghior upazila.

Md Harun-or-Rashid, OC of Barangail Highway Police Station, said the bus, travelling from Dhaka towards Paturia, hit the auto-rickshaw heading from Aricha towards Barangail near Barangail bus stand.

He said that one victim died at the scene and another succumbed to his injuries at a local hospital.

Two others, who suffered critical injuries, are currently undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Following the incident, angry locals blocked the Dhaka-Aricha highway, leaving 200-300 vehicles stranded from 9:30am to 11:30am, the OC said.

Police are investigating the incident, he added.

# Italy dream turns fatal for Sohel

## From Qatar to Egypt and Belarus, his journey ends in a Latvian hospital

**OMAR ALI SHOHAG**

Seven-year-old Jayan Ahmed keeps asking his mother, Jasmin Sultana, whether his father has called. She has no answer.

His father, Sohel Rana, 42, a transport businessman from Ramchandrapur village in Jhenaidah Sadar, died in a Latvian hospital on October 12 after reportedly falling ill while attempting to reach Italy through irregular migration routes.

His family now awaits his body, having spent Tk 31 lakh on what was initially promised as a legal journey to Italy.

According to the family, Sohel left for Qatar on April 6 last year after Sohag Sarkar, an Italy-based Bangladeshi from the same village, allegedly promised to arrange his migration to Italy for Tk 26 lakh within three months.

Instead, Sohel remained stranded in Qatar for about a year. When he decided to return, he was allegedly persuaded to travel to Egypt instead.

After several months there, he again tried to return home but was allegedly intercepted on his way to the airport and taken to Belarus.

"I last spoke to my husband on October 6 when he told me that he had been taken to Belarus," Jasmin said.

The following day, Sohag allegedly called her, claiming Sohel had fallen ill in a forest while travelling towards Latvia. He demanded another Tk 5 lakh for treatment but did not allow her to speak to Sohel.

With help from a foreign ministry welfare official, the family contacted the Polish embassy and Latvian police and learnt that Latvian border guards had found Sohel seriously ill on October 7.

He was admitted to a hospital in Daugavpils, where he died five days later.

"We do not know what actually happened to him. If his body is brought back, at least my two sons will have their father's grave to visit," Jasmin said.



**SOHEL RANA**

Sohel's father, Abul Hashem, said he sold land to finance the journey, while Jasmin sold her jewellery.

"My son had a good business. They lured him with the promise of a future in Italy," he said.

On October 18, Jasmin filed a human trafficking case with a Jhenaidah court against nine members of Sohag's family, including his parents.

This correspondent found Sohag's family home locked. Attempts to contact them by phone failed.

**PRAYER TIMING**

**OCTOBER 23**

| | Fazr | Juma | Asr | Maghrib | Esha |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AZAN | 4-50 | 12-30 | 4-00 | 5-36 | 7-15 |
| JAMAAT | 5-25 | 1-15 | 4-15 | 5-39 | 7-45 |

SOURCE: **ISLAMIC FOUNDATION**

## Measles-like symptoms claim two more lives

**UNB,** *Dhaka*

Two children died with measles-like symptoms in the 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday, bringing the country's combined tally of confirmed and suspected measles-related deaths to 1,207 this year.

DGHS classified the latest fatalities as suspected measles deaths.

With this, the total number of suspected measles deaths has reached 1,103, while confirmed deaths from measles have remained the same at 104.

WFP World Food Programme

**SALE NOTICE**

The United Nations World Food Programme intends to sale old and obsolete assets **(Laptops, Office Equipment, Telecommunication Equipment, Safety Security Devices, Electrical & Electronics Items and Other Scrap Goods)** in several lots on **"as is where is"** basis through competitive sealed bidding process. The assets/ goods/materials will be on display between 09:00-16:00 hrs. during 28-29 Oct 2026 at the WFP Offices in Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, Rangpur and Khulna. Interested bidder(s) will need to collect the bid documents by sending an email request to **Bangladesh.Disposals@wfp.org** mentioning "Request for Sealed Bid Documents " in the subject line.

**Flat Sale**

South facing Lake and Park views flats with modern facilities including Swimming Pool at Jolshiri Sector 14 for SALE. Contact for attractive price: **01769050505**

## 2 brothers electrocuted trying to save father

**UNB,** *Bhola*

Two brothers were electrocuted while trying to save their father after he came into contact with a live electric wire in Burhanuddin upazila of Bhola yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Abdur Rahim, 40, and Md Rakib, 30, sons of Md Alam Boktar of Tazumuddin upazila.

According to locals, Alam was cutting trees in a garden when he came into contact with the snapped wire.

The brothers rushed to rescue their father but also came into contact with the live wire and died on the spot. Alam survived.

Burhanuddin Police Station OC Md Ashrab Ali said no complaint had been filed.

WFP World Food Programme

**Invitation for Expression of Interest (EOI)**
**(WFP/BDCO/EOI/26/003)**
**For the Provision of Waterproofing Services for WFP Premises and Facilities**

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)- Bangladesh hereby invites Expressions of Interest (EOI) from eligible and qualified suppliers who wish to be considered for inclusion in WFP's vendor roster for the provision of Waterproofing Services for WFP Premises and Facilities for the industrial steel profile sheet roofs, Reinforced Cement Concrete (RCC) roof slabs, brick walls, sandwich panels, and associated components, including joints, flashings, and other related waterproofing elements.

**How to prepare and submit your Expression of Interest**

Interested suppliers are required to provide the following documents:
1. The filled in EOI Response Form, which includes:
   - Table 1. WFP Requirements
   - Table 2. Supplier Information;
   - Table 3. Supplier Financial Status;
   - Table 4. Supplier Relevant Experience;
   - Table 5. Signatory by the authorized company representative and company stamp.
2. Supplier Vendor Registration Form

The detailed EOI information, necessary forms are available in the link: **https://cutt.ly/lyRi1rsw**
Companies who meet the WFP pre-defined criteria will be selected for vendor registration in WFP suppliers' roster for invitations to participate in tenders.

**Submission Process**
Interested suppliers are requested to submit the duly completed EOI Response Forms along with all required supporting documents email to: **ban.nfiprocurement@wfp.org**
Recommended email subject line for EOI Submission: **EOI Submission – WFP/BDCO/EOI/26/003 – Waterproofing Services for WFP Premises and Facilities – [Your Company Name]**

For any enquiries or clarifications, please **contact: ban.nfiprocurement@wfp.org**

**Deadline for submission: Closing date for submission is 15 calendar days from the date of publication**

**Office of the Sub Project Manager**
**"PIN 13362 Advancing Climate-Smart Low-Trophic Extractive Mariculture: Integrating Research, Capacity Development, and Coastal Livelihood Resilience to Foster the Blue Economy of Bangladesh" Sub-Project**
**Department of Marine Bioresource Science**
**Chattogram Veterinary and Animal Sciences University**

HEAT Higher Education

Memo No. CVASU/PIN13362/G-2/95 Date: 19 /10/2026

**e-Tender Notice**

e-Tender has been invited in the national e-GP system portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) only for the procurement of following Tender ID.

| Tender ID No. | Package No. | Description of Goods | Publication Date and Time | Last Selling Date and Time | Closing & Opening Date and Time |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1345532 | CVASU/PIN13362/G-2 | Procurement of Chemicals for research on low-trophic mariculture | 25-Oct-2026 10:00 hr | 08-Nov-2026 15:00 hr | 09-Nov-2026 15:00 hr |

This is an e-Tender, and only electronic tenders submitted through the National e-GP System Portal will be accepted. No offline or hard-copy submissions will be accepted.

To participate in this e-Tender, registration with the e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is mandatory. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the e-GP System Portal must be deposited online through any e-GP-registered bank branch during banking hours.

Further information and guidelines are available on the National e-GP System Portal. For assistance, please contact the e-GP Help Desk at helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd.

**Prof. Dr. Md. Asaduzzaman**
Sub Project Manager (SPM)
SP 13362, CVASU-HEAT Project

GD-2569

# France's Macron tightens curbs on protests

## Blames hard left for unrest; Lyon bans all Saturday protests

**REUTERS,** *Paris*

French President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday that "illegitimate" protests would be banned in the coming days and blamed "seditious" ultra-left groups and vandals for last weekend's riots and looting.

Speaking after a meeting with intelligence chiefs and senior ministers, Macron said demonstrations organised by groups such as trade unions would be allowed to go ahead but could be diverted along alternative routes to protect businesses.

"Last Saturday we had political and seditious acts by ultra-left groups whose aim is to bring down the Republic," Macron said. His comments came as authorities across France prepared for fresh protests following some of the country's worst urban unrest in years.

All protests planned for Saturday in Lyon, France's second-largest city, have been banned, local authorities said. Yet fresh demonstrations are already taking shape ahead of what officials fear could be another volatile weekend.

France's main student union, UNEF, has called for rallies tomorrow, while the Yellow Vest movement, the anti-establishment force that emerged in 2018, has filed plans for a march through central Paris.

Businesses in central Paris have begun boarding up their shop windows in case of violence. Luxury goods group Hermes said it had stepped up security measures at its French stores.

Elsewhere, authorities in the northern city of Orleans were bracing for potential unrest as the far-right National Rally was due to hold an annual meeting and unions and left-wing groups planned demonstrations.




**Protesters wave flags and carry signs as they face riot police during an anti-government protest by students in Tirana, Albania, yesterday. Albanian lawmakers grappled on the floor of parliament as the opposition accused the government of violently targeting protesters amid a week of unrest in the capital.** PHOTO: **REUTERS**

# Russia, Ukraine trade missile, drone strikes

## Zelensky says ballistic missile attacks show 'no change' in Kremlin position after Putin-Witkoff talks; Ukraine gets 252 bodies in swap with Russia

**REUTERS,** *Kyiv*

Russia pounded Kyiv with ballistic missiles and Ukraine sent hundreds of drones towards Moscow overnight as the warring sides kept up a barrage of attacks despite the latest US push to end the conflict.

Russia said on Wednesday it was ready to resume US-mediated talks with Ukraine next month, after President Vladimir Putin hosted US envoy Steve Witkoff for talks in St Petersburg.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he hoped negotiations, which would be the first since February, would take place early in November.

But after overnight missile strikes, Zelensky said: "Almost immediately after another round of talks, Russia launched a pointed attack. This means there has been no real change in its attitude towards everything that is happening."

Ukraine said Russia fired at least 21 ballistic missiles in three waves. Russia said Ukraine launched 630 drones towards the capital Moscow during the night.

The two sides held an exchange of war dead, with Moscow handing over 252 bodies and Ukraine handing over 25, according to the Belta state news agency in neighbouring Belarus. Such exchanges have accompanied moves towards talks in the past.

But while Witkoff spoke of "some degree of momentum" after meeting Zelensky and European and Nato officials in Oslo earlier in the week, the Kremlin expressed doubts.

"The Americans sensed some new nuances (in Oslo) and told us about this. But these nuances, so to speak, do not entirely satisfy us," Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov said.

A senior Russian official, briefed on the results of the Putin-Witkoff talks, said they were relatively short and not substantive. The American brought a set of proposals drafted in Oslo and handed them to Putin for review, the person said.



- Ukraine launches 630 drones towards Moscow
- Russia fired 21 ballistic missiles in three waves

Meanwhile, Nato yesterday said it was allowing Ukraine to buy weapons through the alliance's central procurement agency, as the war-torn country seeks to boost arms supplies.

On Wednesday night, Russia carried out a "massive strike" on port infrastructure in Ukraine's Odesa region, as well as on vessels used by the Ukrainian military. In Russia, two people were wounded near Moscow by drones launched towards the capital.

## IN BRIEF



### Iran's Guards hit 4 ships in Gulf

#### Warn US of wider response

**AGENCIES**

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy said yesterday that four vessels involved in illegal oil transfers in the northern Persian Gulf were simultaneously hit and caught fire after being tracked by its forces on Wednesday.

The IRGC added that three more vessels collided with mines west of the Strait of Hormuz, and warned the US military that continued provocations could lead to a wider response against its regional bases.

"The US military must know that if this trend continues, the conflict will extend to its bases in the region," the Guards, the ideological arm of Iran's military, said in a statement on their Sepah News website.

"This is a serious warning," they added.

Iran claims control over Hormuz. It regularly attacks ships that attempt to navigate the strait without its authorisation.

But the US military has been escorting vessels through the waterway in increasing numbers, with Iran responding by stepping up attacks.

POLLS INTIMIDATION

### US Democrats accuse Trump administration

**AFP,** *Washington*

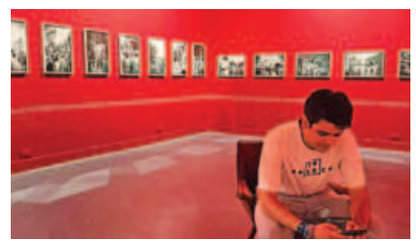
Democratic Party leaders have sued US President Donald Trump and members of his administration, accusing them of aiming "threats and intimidation" at state and local officials in the run-up to the November 3 midterm election.

Democratic governors, Congressional leaders and other party entities filed suit in federal court on Tuesday against Trump, Attorney General Todd Blanche, the Justice Department and Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin, among others.

**Democrats sued Trump, Blanche, Justice Department and Homeland Security chief Mullin in federal court**

Justice and Homeland Security officials have "sought to bolster their interference efforts through a persistent stream of threats and intimidation directed towards state and local election officials across the country," the complaint reads.

Democratic officials railed against the government's request "with just 48 hours' notice" that California refuse to send ballots to more than 20,000 registered voters, citing doubts about their citizenship.



### Rahul Gandhi's nephew alleges forced removal of artwork

**REUTERS,** *New Delhi*

The nephew of Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi said he was forced to remove several pieces of art documenting youth protests from his exhibition at a government-run cultural centre in New Delhi this week, as they were deemed "objectionable."

Raihan Vadra, 26, the son of Gandhi's sister, lawmaker Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, said the management at Bikaner House forced him to remove the artwork just hours before his exhibition opened on Wednesday.

"The photos were of the youth protests in Delhi," Vadra said in a post on social media. "Apparently the content is objectionable."

He was also directed to remove two photographs of the Indian flag but he refused, he said.

Youth protests, led by the Cockroach Janta Party, have emerged as a major challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. A weeks-long sit-in forced the resignation of his education minister in July over exam paper leaks.



**Palestinians spray a vehicle with water after it was hit by an Israeli strike in Gaza City yesterday. Israeli strikes and gunfire killed at least four people in the enclave in separate incidents, health officials said.** PHOTO: **REUTERS**

# UN climate fund moves to provide $20m aid for Nepal

**AFP,** *Washington*

The United Nations' climate loss and damage fund yesterday moved to provide $20 million in aid sought by flood-stricken Nepal, the first time it has set aside money for any country, in a key test of the body's credibility.

In the first extraordinary meeting since its launch in 2022, the fund's board agreed to earmark the modest sum for the Himalayan country, which was hit in August by tsunami-like floods triggered by a climate-induced ice and rock avalanche that killed more than 1,400 people and left over 5,000 missing.

"Hearing no objections, the decision is so adopted," Camila Minerva Rodriguez Tavarez, co-chair of the board, said following a virtual meeting.

The decision does not, however, mean that Nepal will immediately receive the funding, which amounts to less than 0.5 percent of the government's $4.78 billion estimate for reconstruction.

Twenty million dollars is the maximum amount countries can request in a single application.

Nepal will first have to present a proposal, and that proposal will have to be approved by the fund's board. There is no firm timeline for the process.

The creation of the "Fund for responding to Loss and Damage" was hard-won by developing countries, and greeted with standing ovations, at the UN climate conferences of 2022 and 2023 (COP27 and COP28).

But since it became operational, critics have faulted both the meager pledges from governments -- $822 million to date -- and a disbursement cycle disconnected from climate disasters.



No money has been disbursed so far.

Nepal's devastating floods should be a turning point for global climate action, with the international community helping the Himalayan nation recover, a top UN official told AFP on Saturday.

The country suffered one of the worst disasters in its history on August 26, when a mountain collapse near the China border triggered catastrophic floods that killed more than 1,400 people and left over 5,000 missing.

Scientists said climate change played a significant role in that disaster.

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



# Keep politics out of hospital expansion

## New hospital beds should go where patients are

Bangladesh needs more hospital beds. On that, at least, there is no dispute. Public hospitals across the country routinely admit two, three, or even four patients for every bed they have, and the overflow spills onto floors and into corridors. A government that sets out to add capacity deserves credit for recognising the problem. The question raised in a report by this daily is not whether the BNP government should be expanding hospitals, but how it is choosing which ones.

The numbers are uncomfortable. Of the 2,879 beds added to public hospitals since the government took office in February, about 93 percent went to facilities in districts or constituencies linked to ministers and state ministers, including the prime minister. Just 191 were approved elsewhere. In addition, two new government medical colleges have been sanctioned: one in the home district of the president, who was the local government minister when the decision was made, and the other in that of the health minister.

Some of these decisions can be defended on their merit. The medical college hospital in Bogura, the prime minister's home district, was treating more than three patients for every bed before it was expanded from 1,200 to 1,800 beds. Rajshahi, which received a more modest increase, was similarly stretched. The health minister argues that remote areas such as Rangamati have long been neglected and must be brought into the mainstream—a fair point in a country whose healthcare is heavily concentrated in Dhaka. Ministers, moreover, come from many parts of the country; some overlap between their seats and genuine need is to be expected.

**The health minister said the overlooked hospitals are under consideration and asked critics to wait a year. That may prove true. The government has also announced a plan to expand every upazila health complex to 151 beds in phases, which, if delivered, would spread capacity more evenly than anything seen so far. But beds are the easiest part of a hospital**

But the pattern cannot be explained by need alone. Mymensingh Medical College Hospital recorded the highest bed occupancy rate of any medical college hospital in 2024, at 329 percent, and treated about 2.5 times as many inpatients as Bogura. It has not had a bed added since 2013. Hospitals in Khulna, Sylhet, Cumilla, Rangpur and Barishal, all running far above capacity, were passed over, while Mugda Medical College Hospital in Dhaka and Dinajpur—with occupancy rates of 157-169 percent — doubled to 1,000 beds each.

The health minister said the overlooked hospitals are under consideration and asked critics to wait a year. That may prove true. The government has also announced a plan to expand every upazila health complex to 151 beds in phases, which, if delivered, would spread capacity more evenly than anything seen so far. But beds are the easiest part of a hospital; doctors, nurses, equipment, and running budgets are not. The health ministry should strictly use the criteria for expansion—occupancy, inpatient volumes, catchment populations, distance to the nearest tertiary facility, etc—and rank hospitals against them. The Directorate General of Health Services already collects much of the necessary data in its annual health bulletin.

Bangladesh has a long habit of patronage politics. Any administration that claims to break with it must show how it spends public money. Hospital beds are a test.

# Let's sustain the spirit of interfaith harmony

## Peaceful Durga Puja celebration comes with a positive message

As the sound of the dhak faded with Durga's Bisharjan, marking the end of the six-day puja festival, a common feeling resonated across the country. The essence of the slogan, "Dhormo jar jar, utshob shobar" ("Religion belongs to individuals; festivals belong to everyone") was felt more widely than usual. A sense of security and communal harmony prevailed, which has been absent during puja seasons in recent years. We must thank the government for ensuring and enabling such an atmosphere during one of the most important festivities of the Hindu community.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's visits to puja mandaps in Dhaka as well as several other districts demonstrated his personal commitment to ensuring that no untoward incident marred the joyous occasion. His speech, too, reflected his resolve, "Religion may be different; I may follow one religion and you another. But the state belongs to all." That is the message of the Sharbajanin Durga Utshob, in which people from all communities joined this year, enjoying the five-day public holiday, including the weekend. Besides, the increase in government grants for mandaps from Tk 4 crore to Tk 5 crore also sent a positive message. Across the country, 33,851 mandaps were established for the puja.

It was the unprecedented security measures taken well ahead of the festival that contributed the most to the sense of safety. Thousands of members of security forces, including the Border Guard Bangladesh, Bangladesh Coast Guard and Special Response Battalion, were deployed at temples and mandaps around the country, while in the capital, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police assigned 2,072 additional police personnel to guard the festive venues.

That is not to say that there were no pre-puja incidents. Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad reported 34 incidents of idol vandalism, attacks on temples and related clashes ahead of the festival. However, police said their field-level verification found no evidence that the incidents were deliberately orchestrated to undermine communal harmony or disrupt the festival.

Of course, ensuring the safety of minority communities and protecting their rights to practise their faith freely should be a year-round task. Bangladesh will be truly all-inclusive and communal harmony will prevail only when our government and the law enforcement agencies ensure, without exception, that all communities, irrespective of their religion, ethnicity or class, can live and practise their faiths here without facing intimidation and discrimination.

# New info commission faces a bigger task than clearing complaints

*Dr Shamsul Bari and Ruhi Naz are, respectively, the chairman and deputy director (RTI) of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB).*
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■ **SHAMSUL BARI** *and* **RUHI NAZ**

After more than two years of uncertainty, Bangladesh finally has a new Information Commission. We congratulate the newly appointed chief information commissioner—the country's first woman to hold the post—and the two other commissioners, and wish them success. Their appointment brings relief to citizens and civil society organisations that have persistently called for the restoration of this vital institution.

For about two years, they have highlighted the consequences of leaving the commission without commissioners. Conscious citizens, while continuing to exercise their rights under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009, lacked an effective avenue for redress when public authorities refused to provide information. With commissioners now in place, the institution can resume hearing complaints and appeals and take action within its statutory mandate. The greater challenge, however, lies elsewhere.

The commissioners' responsibility is not only to dispose of complaints but also to help replace the country's entrenched administrative culture of secrecy with one of transparency and accountability. The RTI Act's fundamental objective—empowering citizens to understand how public authorities function, scrutinise their activities, and hold them accountable—remains far from being achieved. Bureaucratic resistance, inadequate public awareness, and weak institutional capacity have contributed to this failure. Above all, successive governments have lacked a sustained commitment to openness, while successive Information Commissions have failed to use their statutory powers effectively to challenge official secrecy.

The new commission, therefore, must be more than a forum for settling individual disputes. When information is refused, it should carefully examine the reasons, determine whether the refusal was lawful, and ensure that appropriate remedies or penalties are applied where warranted. Securing eventual disclosure alone may leave the underlying violation or the broader culture of secrecy unaddressed.

The RTI Act provides for penalties for specified violations, including unjustified refusal to provide information and deliberate obstruction. Yet previous commissions appeared reluctant to exercise these powers decisively, risking the impression that non-compliance carries little consequence. The new commissioners should enforce the law firmly, fairly, and consistently, paying particular attention to repeated or deliberate violations. A few well-reasoned decisions imposing warranted sanctions could do more to change official behaviour than numerous awareness seminars.

That said, some information may legitimately be withheld under the law. But exemptions from disclosure for reasons set out in the law are exceptions to the principle of openness, not excuses to be used as convenient. A public authority invoking an exemption must identify the relevant legal provision and explain precisely why it applies. Merely citing the act should not suffice. The commission must independently scrutinise such explanations, especially when public expenditure, essential services, or government decisions are involved. Where only part of a document is exempt from disclosure, it should consider whether the remainder can be released.




VISUAL: **ALIZA RAHMAN**

As discussed in an earlier article, Sri Lanka's RTI Commission and courts, in a case concerning former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's departure during a political crisis, distinguished sensitive security information from details of public expenditure. While protecting information legitimately exempt from disclosure, they upheld the right to access non-exempt information. The lesson is clear: claims of secrecy must withstand rigorous legal scrutiny.

As a statutory adjudicatory body, the Information Commission should issue reasoned decisions that identify the issues, consider both parties' arguments, apply the relevant legal provisions, and explain its conclusions. Brief directions may settle individual disputes but do little to establish consistent interpretations of the law. Publishing significant decisions in an accessible, searchable format would also guide officials and applicants, promote consistency, and gradually build a valuable body of RTI jurisprudence. Attention must also be given to establishing an effective follow-up and monitoring mechanism, including accountability measures to ensure that concerned designated officers implement decisions in a timely manner.

We have previously documented how ordinary citizens have sought information about schools, hospitals, social protection, land, public works, local public resources, etc. In northern Bangladesh, applicants have questioned the disposal of government trees, investigated abandoned projects, and demanded better services. Some have faced intimidation from officials unwilling to accept their right to ask questions. The commission should respond promptly to such allegations of unlawful refusal, harassment or retaliation, taking appropriate action within its powers. Women, rural residents, and disadvantaged applicants deserve particular attention.

The backlog of cases accumulated during the prolonged absence of commissioners also demands a published, time-bound plan for disposing of pending cases. The RTI regime's success cannot be measured solely by the number of applications received or complaints resolved, however. Public authorities must also proactively disclose important information, including their functions, decisions, budgets, expenditure and services, as required by the law.

It bears repeating how vital it is that the commission monitors compliance, publishes its findings, promotes sound record management, and ensures that information officers receive adequate training. It could also publish comparative assessments of public authorities' disclosure performance using transparent criteria. Such measures would help make openness a routine administrative practice rather than an exception secured through complaints.

The commission must also practise the transparency it demands by regularly publishing its decisions, penalties, compliance rates, and case statistics. It should also consult journalists, civil society organisations, and grassroots RTI users. Above all, it must act independently of political and bureaucratic pressure. The government, for its part, must provide adequate resources while respecting that independence.

In the final analysis, the commissioners inherit not simply a backlog of cases needing adjudication but also an unfinished democratic mission. Their success in the long term will be measured by whether public officials become more willing to disclose information and citizens more confident in demanding it. They take office amid high expectations, shaped by both the commission's prolonged inactivity and the changed political environment post-uprising. We hope they will rise to the challenge and ensure that citizens' right to know is not merely a promise enshrined in law but a reality in everyday life.

# Gender-responsive budgets need women decision-makers



*Rizwana Tabassum is a PhD researcher and finance and governance professional.*

■ **RIZWANA TABASSUM**

When a government prepares its budget, the discussion often centers on revenue, expenditure, aid, deficits, and development priorities. But behind these numbers are real lives. Decisions to fund a hospital, build a school, expand a social protection initiative, or improve public transport can affect women and men in different ways. We often ask whether enough public money goes to women's needs. But there is another question worth asking: who gets to make those decisions? We must also consider whether women have a meaningful voice in the institutions that raise, allocate, spend, and analyse public money.

Bangladesh's FY2026-27 budget brings this question into sharper focus, as the gender-relevant budget reached Tk 3,26,059.8 crore, equivalent to 34.8 percent of the national budget. However, the allocation for the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has fallen to Tk 5,196 crore from Tk 5,371 crore in the previous year's revised budget, while recent analysis has raised concerns about implementation, outcome measurement, and accountability. These figures prompt the question of how we can ensure that public spending advances gender equality and who has the authority to make those decisions.

A recently published book, Women in Public Finance: Stories of Gender in Budgeting, edited by Maja Bosnić and Manal Fouad, brings this question into focus. Through the experiences of women working in public finance across different countries, the book highlights the challenges and opportunities facing women in a field traditionally dominated by technical discourse and male leadership. It reminds us that public finance is not gender-neutral simply because its language is technical.

Bangladesh has made notable progress in women's education, economic participation, and political representation. It has also developed experience in gender-responsive budgeting, seeking to align public expenditure with gender equality and women's empowerment. These efforts are important, but they raise a further question: while governments increasingly consider women in their budgets, are enough women involved in shaping the decisions behind those budgets?

In my more than 20 years of experience in finance, governance, audit, treasury management, and public sector reform, I have seen an increasing number of women joining accounting, auditing, economics, and financial management, bringing talent, expertise, and fresh perspectives to the field. But while women are well represented at entry and mid-career levels, they are still underrepresented in senior leadership positions where strategic decisions are made.

The Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Gender Responsive Public Financial Management Framework, launched in 2020, offers a useful way to examine this relationship. Its nine indicators assess how gender considerations are incorporated across the budget cycle, including policy analysis, public investment, expenditure tracking, service delivery evaluation, and legislative scrutiny. The framework makes clear that gender responsiveness is not simply about identifying allocations for women; it is also about examining how public financial management systems operate and what results they achieve. For Bangladesh, the next step should be to connect gender-related budget allocations more systematically with implementation, measurable outcomes, and accountability. Governments need reliable information on who benefits from public spending, whether services are accessible and effective, and where gaps remain.

Women's participation can strengthen this process. Women working in finance ministries, budget divisions, audit institutions, public enterprises, and reform programmes can contribute their professional expertise and perspectives to policy design and oversight. Decisions about taxation, public investment, social protection, healthcare, education, and infrastructure can have different consequences for different groups, and these differences deserve careful analysis.

This calls for practical institutional changes. Women should have fair access to senior technical and leadership positions in public finance, supported by transparent promotion processes, mentoring, and opportunities to lead major reforms. Budget institutions should make greater use of sex-disaggregated performance data and independent evaluations to assess who benefits from public expenditure. Audit findings and legislative scrutiny should also examine whether public programmes achieve their intended results for women and men.

Equally important is the need to recognise women as decision-makers, not merely as beneficiaries of public policy. Their participation should extend throughout the public financial management cycle, including decisions about revenue, spending priorities, implementation, and accountability. This requires more than appointing women to committees; it requires giving them the authority, information, and institutional support needed to influence decisions.

The argument is not that women automatically make better financial decisions than men. Good public finance depends on professional competence, sound evidence, integrity, and effective institutions. But institutions make better-informed decisions when they draw on a wider range of experiences and perspectives. Excluding capable professionals from leadership narrows the pool of talent available to solve complex public problems.

Bangladesh has demonstrated its ability to pursue ambitious reforms in public financial management and women's empowerment. The opportunity now is to bring these agendas closer together: to strengthen not only the gender responsiveness of public budgets but also women's participation in the institutions that formulate, implement, and scrutinise them.

Ultimately, a budget is more than a financial document. It reflects public priorities, distributes opportunities, and determines how citizens experience the state. Ensuring that women have a meaningful voice in these decisions is not simply a matter of representation. It is part of building more responsive, transparent and accountable public institutions.

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# Declining secondary school enrolment demands urgent reforms



*Dr Manzoor Ahmed is professor emeritus at BRAC University, chair of Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), and adviser to Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).*
*Views expressed in this article are the writer's own.*

■ MANZOOR AHMED

A sharp decline in secondary school enrolment reported by the education statistics bureau, BANBEIS, has brought to public attention the many problems within our public schools. The total enrolment declined by over 4,00,000 in just one year—falling from 90.6 lakh in 2024 to 86.4 lakh in 2025. This amounts to about a 5-percent decline in overall student enrolment at the secondary level, on top of about one-third of enrolled students dropping out between Classes 6 and 10. At the same time, madrasa enrolment increased by about 2 percent. Enrolment at English-medium schools has also been on the rise. The overall decline and the pattern of change in enrolment at different types of institutions signal long-standing and deep systemic issues that need to be addressed.

Education analysts, drawing on available evidence, suggest that the causes behind the shift range from household economic crises to flaws in the education system. There are immediate and longer-term factors which influence parents' decisions and prospects for children's education.

Among immediate causes, family financial hardship is likely to be the most serious impediment. Education Watch reports for 2022 and 2023 by the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), alongside other recent studies, suggest that rising poverty and high out-of-pocket education costs may have forced families to withdraw children from schools or seek less costly options at madrasas. Economic stress drives boys into the labour market, while girls are pushed into child marriage. A Dhaka Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board investigation revealed that nearly 41 percent of candidates who missed the 2025 SSC exams had been absent because they had married recently. Around 97 percent of these students were girls.

At the same time, learning losses incurred during pandemic-related school closures have never been recovered. Many students fell further behind as they were automatically promoted to higher grades. Climate shocks—such as floods, storms, waterlogging, and the creeping salinity in coastal groundwater—affects children and families at home and school, while political shifts of recent years disrupted school continuity.

Mainstream education has also suffered due to poorly managed institutions, massive teacher shortages, lack of monitoring, and corruption in school management committees. Many classrooms are also overcrowded, and while schools having a Monthly Pay Order (MPO) system are allowed to have a second section for a class only if the number of students exceeds 55, even that rarely happens because of teacher and funding shortage.

An overloaded curriculum cannot be translated into effective learning activities in classrooms by overburdened and poorly qualified teachers. The result is students' heavy reliance on guidebook memorisation and private coaching classes rather than real learning. Assessment within public examinations also end up testing set and memorised answers rather than evaluating students' actual range of knowledge and skills.

An estimated two-thirds of schools, including government and private high schools, have not had a permanent head teacher for prolonged periods, running up to a decade or so in some cases—leaving schools without effective management and leadership. Shortage of teachers has indeed become a chronic issue across the country. Over 80,000 teaching positions, one in five of all teachers, remained vacant in secondary schools, said the education minister in parliament on April 23 this year. Among secondary schools, 3,861 remain without ICT teachers, 2,744 without math teachers, and 2,625 without English teachers.



**By drawing children away from mainstream education, students' economic mobility is limited early on, determining low-wage jobs or informal labour markets as the destiny for many.**

FILE PHOTO: **RASHED SHUMON**

**Mainstream education has also suffered due to poorly managed institutions, massive teacher shortages, lack of monitoring, and corruption in school management committees. Many classrooms are also overcrowded, and while schools having a Monthly Pay Order (MPO) system are allowed to have a second section for a class only if the number of students exceeds 55, even that rarely happens because of teacher and funding shortage.**

Consistent underfunding has plagued the system. The government has consistently allocated less than 2 percent of its GDP to education (with actual spending being substantially less), failing to meet the Unesco-recommended 4 percent to 6 percent. This leaves the majority of secondary schools with issues such as inadequate staff numbers; unqualified teachers; and insufficient classrooms, laboratories, libraries, clean toilets, and proper ICT infrastructure and connectivity.

The recent madrasa preference of many parents deserves a closer look, and so does the increase in the number of both high-end English-medium schools (following an international curriculum) and the mushrooming of relatively low-cost "kindergartens" of uncertain quality in small towns.

While general secondary schools have to do much more to integrate modern STEM frameworks, advanced computing, and market-driven skills for work, madrasas are even less responsive to contemporary requirements. By drawing low-income children away from mainstream secondary education, students' economic mobility is limited early on, determining low-wage jobs or informal labour markets as the destiny for many. The outcome is a divided society and a workforce lacking in soft skills, language abilities, and technological literacy.

Although female students have historically had higher enrolment rates in Bangladesh's secondary education, mainstream dropouts heavily affect girls who are subjected to child marriage. For girls who are diverted to madrasas, access to formal jobs, tech-based employment, and STEM fields shrinks, setting back progress in women's empowerment.

The current BNP government is clearly struggling to respond to declining enrolment and various long-standing problems in the school system. Interventions such as expanding midday meals, providing students with uniforms and school bags, and emphasising sports activities will be implemented in phases to reach all students. More complex measures to restructure the curriculum such as expanding ICT with the "one-teacher-one-tab" initiative, compulsory vocational courses in general secondary schools, and stricter student assessment are underway. Steps have also been taken to recruit headteachers and teachers, but appear to be proceeding at snail's pace, without the urgency this situation demands. Free textbooks and modest stipends for the majority of students remain in place. The government has also pledged a gradual increase in the budget allocation for education to 5 percent of GDP. Its first budget for FY2026-27 has modestly increased education's share of GDP.

Will the measures initiated by the government halt the decline in enrolment and even result in a turnaround? Educationists and civic leaders ask if the initiatives are adequate or "too little, too slow"—devoid of a holistic vision, a comprehensive framework of sustained change, and a sense of urgency? Indeed, there are no "quick fixes" to the myriad structural and operational problems within our school system. While physical infrastructure has grown somewhat, the core issues of quality, cost, and governance remain largely unresolved.

Last year, a consultative committee headed by this author on secondary education, upon appointment by the past interim government, examined many of the issues noted throughout this article. The committee made recommendations regarding immediate and longer-term actions. A total of 118 recommendations covering pedagogy and learning assessment; handling curriculum and learning content; rethinking teachers' role, status, and career path; management of individual schools and system governance; and adequate and efficient education financing were provided. These were categorised by the possibility of early, medium-term, and long-term actions.

But recommendations are of little value unless they can be implemented. And failure of implementation has long been the Achilles' heel in education reform efforts. The aforementioned committee had made specific suggestions about the pathway, administrative steps, and timeline that could be followed to break this trend. The committee's recommendations, following extensive dialogues and field visits, are not necessarily the last words on what should be done, but they deserve serious consideration, especially given the prevailing and emerging challenges in our education sector.

# *Key priorities for Bangladesh to pursue at COP31*



*Monira Sharmin is joint convener at National Citizen Party (NCP). She can be reached at monirasharmin111@gmal.com.*

■ MONIRA SHARMIN

The 31st United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP31), set to begin on November 9 in Antalya, Türkiye, convenes a significant test of international cooperation and climate justice against the backdrop of geopolitical unrest, ongoing armed conflicts, an unprecedented energy crisis, and ambiguity about the United States' commitment to climate action. It is quite contradictory that the biggest producers of greenhouse gases (GHGs) and military spending in the world devote far more funds to defence than to international climate finance, with military spending sometimes having surpassed climate support by as much as 5,000 percent in recent years. Hence, COP31 must become a platform for demanding climate reparations, equitable finance, and accountability from historically culpable nations—an obligation anchored in the premise of "Polluter Pays".

Facing the impacts of climate change in real time, COP31 offers a window for Bangladesh to negotiate not just for climate finance but for climate justice, economic security, technological transfer, and protection of the vulnerable community. The prime concern for the country is to effectively use the conference to get tangible pledges from rich nations and international climate organisations that result in opportunities, resources, and protection for Bangladeshi citizens. In his speech at the UN General Assembly in September, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman urged more international action on climate justice, climate financing, and adaptation help. This is a good place to start when creating the COP31 negotiation agenda.

First, Bangladesh ought to put emphasis on climate funding when negotiating at the climate conference. The country needs significant investment to strengthen climate resilience, safeguard vulnerable groups, and achieve sustainable development because it is a developing nation that is vulnerable to climate change. But depending too much on loans to address climate consequences risks adding to the country's financial load, especially when resources are also required for infrastructure development, healthcare, job creation and education. So the country ought to promote highly concessional financing when appropriate, as well as predictable, accessible grant-based climate finance from developed countries.

It should also demand more funding for community-driven adaptation projects, streamlined application processes, and open reporting of climate finance pledges and disbursements. The fundamental condition should be that, under the UN climate regime, international climate funding must represent the values of justice and shared but distinct duties and capacities. The success of COP31 should be determined not only by the amount of money committed but also by the amount of finance that is actually delivered, how quickly it reaches its intended communities, and whether it lessens climate vulnerability.

Loss and damage is another priority agenda for Bangladesh. The nation still experiences catastrophic effects from cyclones, floods, river erosion, salinity intrusion, and rising sea levels despite efforts in disaster preparedness and climate adaptation. In addition to inflicting non-economic costs such as deterioration of cultural assets and disruption in communal life, these effects have the potential to destroy homes, agricultural land, fisheries, infrastructure, and livelihoods. Bangladesh should strive for more responsive finance arrangements for climate-vulnerable nations, simplified access procedures, and substantial and consistent contributions to the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD). It should also stress how crucial it is to assist with both monetary and non-monetary losses, such as community rehabilitation and livelihood recovery.

Over the years, Bangladesh has seen an increasing number of displaced people due to climate change, especially in riverine villages and coastal areas that are impacted by erosion, heavy rainfall, and salinity intrusion. Displacement can put more strain on housing, work, healthcare, education, and urban infrastructure when individuals lose their homes, farmland, or means of subsistence. Despite that, a universal legal status that automatically provides refugee protection to all those affected by climate change has still not been established by international climate negotiations. In order to resolve displacement while upholding current legal frameworks and human rights duties, Bangladesh should seek effective international collaboration.



**A drone view shows people carrying the roof of a house in a village in Kurigram, a district in northern Bangladesh that loses farmlands and houses to river erosion every year, forcing the locals to relocate.**

FILE PHOTO: **REUTERS**

At COP31, the country should also advocate for international financing that supports renewable energy deployment, modernisation of power grids, energy storage, and cleaner industrial production. It should also seek technical and financial assistance for workers and communities affected by changes in energy production and industrial processes. Green employment should be an integral part of the transition, with investment in skills development and opportunities for young people to work in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and climate-resilient industries. Further emphasis should be placed on the urgency of climate policies considering energy affordability and reliability while supporting a gradual reduction in dependence on imported fossil fuels.

International climate finance's efficacy is contingent not only on the quantity of funds available but also on who may access them and who benefits most from their use. Accessing resources, taking part in decision-making, and recovering from climate-related shocks might be particularly difficult for women, young people, smallholder farmers, fishermen, and workers in the unorganised sector in Bangladesh. For instance, women in coastal communities that are vulnerable to climate change may face more challenges in obtaining clean drinking water, sustaining their livelihoods, and gaining access to necessary services during emergencies. Bangladesh should promote gender-responsive climate finance, more robust support for locally driven adaptation, and significant involvement of youth and impacted communities in climate planning at COP31.

For Bangladesh, COP31 must be more than just another diplomatic endeavour to obtain international commitments. It should be an opportunity to pursue accessible climate finance, climate action that safeguards people, and international collaboration that yields quantifiable outcomes. The country should use evidence-based ideas, explicit funding requirements, and workable implementation methods in addition to its moral and legal justifications for climate justice in its negotiation strategy. It can seek greater collective support for the priorities it shares with other climate-vulnerable countries by collaborating with the Climate Vulnerable Forum, the Least Developed Countries group, and other pertinent negotiating coalitions.

In the end, the effectiveness of Bangladesh's climate diplomacy should be assessed by how well the pledges protect coastal communities, preserve livelihoods, increase access to clean water, improve preparedness for disasters, and open doors for future generations. Let's hope for the best.

# FROM NEWSMAN TO STAR

## Celebrating Mahfuz Ahmed



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

**SHAH ALAM SHAZU**

Before becoming one of the leading television actors of the 1990s, Mahfuz Ahmed spent his days reporting on political affairs and interviewing prominent politicians.

As he celebrates his birthday today, we take a glimpse into the persistence behind a career spanning television, cinema, directing and production.

While studying at Dhaka University, the actor worked as a political reporter for the weekly Purnima. Interviewing prominent politicians and filing regular reports were part of his routine. Then, an unexpected opportunity introduced him to acting.

His first television appearance was a small role in ***Kon Kanoner Phool***, written by Imdadul Haq Milon and produced by Fakhrul Abedin Dulal. He had just one line of dialogue. That was all—but he did not stop there.

The aspiring actor kept returning to the television station in Rampura, hoping for more opportunities. He eventually landed the role of Moti in ***Kothao Keu Nei***, which introduced him to a wider audience.

Determination, patience and the desire to keep working gradually helped him establish himself. In time, he began appearing as a leading man opposite three of television's most popular actresses: Shomi Kaiser, Bipasha Hayat and Afsana Mimi.

His performance alongside Bipasha in ***Shurur Kobita*** drew attention early in his career. He also starred opposite Shomi and Bipasha in ***Tomake Chhuye***, a drama that struck a chord with viewers.

For years, the reporter-turned-actor remained a familiar leading man on television, later working opposite Aupee Karim, Tareen and Richie Solaiman, among others. He was also Mehazabien Chowdhury's co-star in her debut television drama.

Among his most memorable roles was the title character in ***Amader Nurul Huda***. The character brought him widespread recognition and multiple Meril-Prothom Alo Awards.

He also played the title role in the long-running serial ***Choita Pagol***, which he directed. The production earned him recognition both in front of and behind the camera. His subsequent directorial work, ***Tomar Doway Bhalo Achi Ma***, also found an audience.

In the popular serial ***Ekannoborti***, the artiste played Farhad, another character that won viewers' affection. He also took on the title role in a television adaptation of ***Devdas*** and appeared regularly in Humayun Ahmed's dramas.

His move into cinema came with Humayun Ahmed's ***Srabon Megher Din***. He went on to appear in the same director's ***Dui Duari*** and earned praise for his performance in Tauquir Ahmed's ***Joyjatra***.

***Lal Sobuj*** brought him his first National Film Award for Best Actor. He later won the honour again for ***Zero Degree***, directed by Animesh Aich, which he also produced.

More recently, he earned praise for his performance in Chayanika Chowdhury's ***Prohelika***. His work has also reached audiences on OTT platforms, adding another chapter to a career that began with a single line on television.

"I seek everyone's blessings and love. People's prayers mean a great deal. Please keep me in your prayers," he told The Daily Star.




## 'Mohanagar', 'Bohemian Ghora' to stream on Netflix

Netflix has partnered with Bengali streaming platform Hoichoi to bring its series to audiences across India, including acclaimed Bangladeshi productions ***Mohanagar*** and ***Bohemian Ghora***.

Under the deal, all Hoichoi series premiering over the next two years will stream exclusively on Netflix in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. Other titles include ***Madam Inspector***, ***Sampurna***, ***Lojja***, ***Queens*** and ***Parineeta: A Love Story***.

New releases will debut in Bengali on Hoichoi alongside their Hindi, Tamil and Telugu versions on Netflix. The lineup includes ***The Cursed Temple of Kauriburi***, a folklore-inspired horror series starring Jeetu Kamal, Solanki Roy and Paoli Dam. It premieres on November 6.

The platforms will also develop original adaptations through Hoichoi Studios.

### EVENTS

## 'Art'

Open Space Theatre stages Yasmina Reza's celebrated comedy, in which the purchase of an expensive painting turns a friendship among three men into a battle over taste, money and mutual respect. Directed by M Arifur Rahman, the play finds the fault lines beneath everyday banter, asking how much disagreement a friendship can withstand.

**Date:** Saturday | October 24, 2026
**Time:** 4:30pm onwards
**Venue:** Experimental Theatre Hall, BSA




# NEWS

## Mob kills paralysed man

FROM PAGE 12

he struggled to make ends meet, often relying on others for help.

Hoping to rebuild his life, Alam, 41, came to Dhaka from Natore's Bagatipur upazila in search of work.

With a relative's help, he secured a job as a security guard at a house in Dhanmondi on October 1, only to lose it within two days due to his physical and mental condition following the stroke.

He found another job the following day and was scheduled to join on November 1, according to his family.

But before he could start afresh, his life was cut short.

On Wednesday night, Alam was beaten to death at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital on suspicion of being a "child kidnapper".

According to his family, he had gone to the hospital around 11:00pm in search of food and shelter.

Relatives of children admitted there, however, grew suspicious and questioned him. Dissatisfied with his answers, they dragged him downstairs and beat him severely.

A hospital employee who witnessed the incident said Alam had been speaking incoherently.

"At one point, he claimed his wife was admitted to the hospital but failed to give clear answers to further questions," the employee said, requesting anonymity.

The employee said several people beat Alam to death before fleeing the scene.

Yesterday, 15 to 20 family members waited outside the hospital morgue.

His elder brother Yusuf Ali, an auto-rickshaw driver in Mirpur's Rupnagar, struggled to come to terms with his death. He had spoken to Alam over the phone just two days earlier.

"I received a call around 11:00am yesterday and was told my brother was ill. We reached the hospital around 1:00pm and searched the premises, only to learn that his body was in the morgue.

"He was not even inside the children's ward; he was just wandering around. They could have handed him over to the police if necessary, but witnesses here told me they beat him to death."

Yusuf said Alam sometimes went hungry and sought help from others but had never stole anything or had a criminal record.

"And they killed him on suspicion of being a child kidnapper," he said.

Alam's cousin Habibur Rahman said he had been physically and mentally unwell since the stroke but remained in regular contact with his family.

"After getting the job, my brother started dreaming of building a new life with his family. But they killed him on suspicion of being a child kidnapper. He has three children of his own. Why would he kidnap a child?"

Contacted, Masud Rana, inspector (operations) at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, said police recovered Alam's body from the hospital after being informed of the incident.

"Following an inquest, the body was sent to the morgue for an autopsy."

One person has been detained, he said, adding that the body was handed over to the family following legal procedures.

## Don't put people thru more pain

FROM PAGE 12

overpasses may also be widened to four lanes.

By December 2024, around 97 percent of the infrastructure work had been completed, while overall physical progress stood at 77.48 percent.

Speaking to The Daily Star over the project scrapping, BIP General Secretary Prof Md Musleh Uddin Hasan said concerns over traffic congestion, pedestrian safety, and the operation of buses from stations in the middle of the road could be addressed through better planning, traffic management, and appropriate infrastructure.

"One of the key arguments against the project is that reserving a dedicated lane for BRT buses would leave fewer lanes for other vehicles, worsening congestion."

However, he argued that poor traffic management, particularly buses stopping at undesignated locations, was a major cause of congestion along the corridor.

When buses stop indiscriminately, others often queue behind them, obstructing traffic. Ensuring that buses pick up and drop off passengers only at designated stops could help traffic flow more smoothly, he said.

Prof Hasan also disputed concerns about passengers crossing the road to reach BRT stations.

Several footbridges already exist along the 20.5km corridor, while around 18 additional footbridges were reportedly built under the project, although the exact number requires verification, he said.

The BIP general secretary said pedestrian crossings should be planned according to the road's function, noting that designated crossings and footbridges would also be necessary if the corridor were converted into a conventional highway.

Regarding concerns about buses operating from median stations, Prof Hasan said the proposed buses reportedly had doors on both sides, allowing passengers to board and alight from stations in the road median.

He added that the issue had been discussed with BRT authorities during the bus procurement process.

Prof Hasan also suggested exploring an extension beyond the airport to connect the route with the existing public transport network, potentially linking it to a nearby metro station or locations such as Bijoy Sarani or Mohakhali.

Regarding the road safety issue, he said accident risks should be assessed in terms of road design, speed management, pedestrian facilities, and enforcement, rather than treated as an inevitable consequence of BRT.

A conventional highway would also require appropriate safety measures, particularly if operating speeds increased.

Prof Hasan warned that dismantling the infrastructure along the corridor would be complex and costly, requiring the removal of substantial structures and reconstruction of the road. The work could further disrupt commuters and prolong traffic congestion.

Referring to a reported estimate of Tk 45 crore for demolition, he said the final cost could be higher once road reconstruction, traffic management and commuters' losses from additional delays were considered. He also highlighted potential safety risks during demolition.

He argued that authorities should account for public money already invested in the project and compare the cost of completing or modifying the BRT system with that of dismantling it and restoring the road.

Prof Hasan questioned the apparent reluctance to allocate additional funds to existing public transport infrastructure, referring to an estimated Tk 800 crore in annual metro rail subsidies in the previous year.

He also cited approximately Tk 1,200 crore reportedly spent or committed to the BRT project, suggesting that completing or modifying it could require another Tk 800 crore to Tk 1,000 crore.

Major transport decisions, he said, should consider total expenditure, future benefits, operational feasibility and impacts on commuters, rather than construction or demolition costs alone.

Prof Hasan warned that converting the corridor into a conventional highway could encourage greater reliance on private cars, increasing fossil fuel consumption, and air pollution if efficient public transport alternatives were not provided.

He stressed that transport planning should prioritise mass transit and sustainable mobility rather than road expansion alone.

In a statement yesterday, the Institute for Planning and Development opposed the decision of scrapping the BRT project, saying that around 97 percent of the work had been completed.

IPD Executive Director Prof Adil Muhammad Khan said completing the remaining work would better serve public interests.

The organisation urged the government to reverse the decision, investigate delays and cost overruns, hold those responsible accountable, and launch the service through a time-bound plan.

Meanwhile, a citizens' platform staged a sit-in and formed a human chain on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in the Gazipur's Bhogra Bypass area on Friday, protesting the government's decision.

At the programme, organised by Sachetan Nagarik Oikya, Gazipur, Ali Nasher Khan, chief organiser of the NCP's central executive committee, claimed only 3 percent of the project remained incomplete.

He said an additional Tk 1,400 crore could complete the work and purchase 187 buses.

He added that dismantling the infrastructure could take five years, prolonging traffic congestion.

The project was funded by the government, the Asian Development Bank, and France's Agence Française de Développement.

## Private bank

FROM PAGE 12

Under the previous rules, candidates had to be serving or former bank officers with at least 20 years of experience. An amendment in July this year added a requirement for at least two years of experience in the position immediately below that of MD or CEO.

Both requirements remain in place, but the latest amendment allows the two-year requirement to be waived for candidates with special skills, professional qualifications, leadership ability and a good reputation.

The age requirement of 45 to 65 years, the three-year contract term and the nomination process remain unchanged.

However, lower salaries at public banks may make it harder to attract talent from the private sector.

Among the public banks, Sonali's MD receives the highest salary of Tk 6 lakh.

The move comes after the government cancelled the remaining tenures of the contractual MDs and CEOs of Sonali, Janata and Rupali banks.

## Envoy to Japan to be kept in Dhaka during PM's visit

FROM PAGE 2

had not been involved in preparations for the trip despite being recalled for consultations.

Daud is scheduled to go on post-retirement leave on December 7.

According to the schedule, Tarique is due to hold bilateral talks with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on October 27. The talks are expected to focus on trade, investment, infrastructure development and implementation of the Bangladesh-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement.

Officials said there is no precedence of a serving Bangladeshi ambassador being brought back to Dhaka and kept away from the host country during a prime ministerial visit.

The decision has also surprised Japanese officials, according to sources, who are seeking to understand the rationale behind it.

Ambassadors typically play a key role in high-level visits, including negotiations, building mutual understanding, and coordinating arrangements between the two governments.

## Turf war leaves one killed, 5 hurt

FROM PAGE 12

people, including Taizul, arrived at the scene in an auto-rickshaw wearing black burqas and pink hijabs.

They detonated crude bombs before attacking two brothers, Jahir and Mohasin, with sharp weapons, leaving them injured.

The attack triggered a clash between the assailants and associates of the two brothers. During the violence, Taizul, Jahir and Mohasin sustained stab wounds.

When locals took them to Kalkini Upazila Health Complex, they were referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, as their conditions were critical.

Meanwhile, Taizul's condition deteriorated on the way to Dhaka, so he was taken to Madaripur 250-bed District Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, the police official said.

Others who sustained minor injuries received treatment and returned home, he added.

Police have launched an investigation to identify and arrest those involved in the incident. No case had been filed in connection with the incident as of last night.

"We believe the violence took place over establishing dominance in the area," said Addl SP Jahangir.

## 'For how long will we gain experience?'

FROM PAGE 12

In Japan, stadiums have synthetic practice tracks and advanced gym equipment. We must improve our facilities and technology to compete internationally.

**DS:** How can Bangladesh develop medal-winning athletes?

**SK:** We need to develop athletes early through grassroots and school-level sports. If government initiatives to introduce 10 sports disciplines in schools are sustained, they can build students' interest and produce stronger athletes.

**DS:** What should federations and policymakers prioritise?

SK: Federations should send athletes abroad for training, where facilities and training systems are more advanced. Instead of preparing for major events just two or three months beforehand, they should follow continuous four-year plans, with regular international competitions and training camps.

**DS:** How should Bangladesh measure success at major multi-sport events?

**SK:** We should not participate in major multi-sport events merely to gain experience. How long will we keep gaining experience? We must set clear targets and aim to win medals. Bangladeshi athletes have natural ability, but that potential needs proper training and support.

**DS:** What is your target at the upcoming South Asian Games?

**SK:** I am confident of finishing in the top three with proper support and a few months of training abroad. While top international female athletes jump over seven metres, I believe structured, high-level training could help me improve my personal best of 6.25 metres by around 50 centimetres, taking me to between 6.50 and 6.75 metres.

**DS:** How does job security affect athletes' careers?

**SK:** Athletes serving in the defence forces feel more secure because they know they will have jobs after retiring from sports. Those without jobs often worry about their future and hope to become coaches or physical education teachers.

Creating more permanent sports positions across the Army, Navy, Air Force, Police, BGB, Ansar, Railway and banks would provide financial security, encourage more people to take up athletics and improve overall performance.

# No possibility of Hasina's return in next 10 years: Hafiz

**UNB,** *Bhola*



Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad yesterday said he believes there is no possibility of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina returning to Bangladesh in the next 10 years.

"From my political experience, I think there is no possibility for Sheikh Hasina to return even in the next 10 years," he said while talking to reporters at the Bhola Circuit House.

The Speaker said the Awami League, which now faces a ban on its activities, created an environment during its tenure where honest, good and impartial people in society could not contest elections.

He said fundamental reforms to the electoral system are necessary to ensure that ordinary people with public support and social acceptance, even without substantial financial resources, can participate in elections. "The Election Commission should devise a system which will create opportunities for ordinary citizens to contest polls."

Hafiz Uddin also said the upcoming local government elections must be free, fair and impartial, noting that elections had not been fair over the past 15 years.



**A network of electric pumps and suction pipes lies along the bank of the Turag river at Gabtoli in Dhaka yesterday. Traders allegedly use the equipment to draw river water and soak sand, stone and brick chips, artificially increasing their weight before sale. Cargo vessels are seen anchored along the riverbank in the background.**

PHOTO: **RASHED SHUMON**

# Govt working to amend various laws, including CSA: minister

**BSS,** *Bhola*



Information and Broadcasting Minister Andaleeve Rahman has said the government is working to amend various laws, including the cybersecurity act, to ensure equal protection for all.

He said discussions were underway with stakeholders, including television channel owners and newspaper editors, to make the process more effective.

Policies were being formulated to ensure equal protection for media personnel, the administration and the public, he said, expressing hope for positive results soon.

The minister made the remarks while talking to reporters on Wednesday night during a visit to puja mandaps in his home constituency of Bhola Sadar.

Referring to the killing of a journalist in Netrokona, Andaleeve said any violation of the law, whether involving a journalist or someone from another profession, would be dealt with under existing laws.

The minister visited puja mandaps at nine temples in Bhola Sadar, accompanied by leaders and activists of Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) and its affiliated organisations.

## No Biman flights to Riyadh till Oct 31

FROM PAGE 2

Houthis allegedly carry out daily attacks on the kingdom.

Restrictions at Saudi Arabian airports have affected 135 flights involving Bangladesh and disrupted travel for 20,672 passengers, according to the latest figures from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB).

Of the affected flights, 62 were direct services between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia, while 73 involved connections through other countries. The figures represent an increase of one flight and 418 passengers from Wednesday's tally of 134 flights and 20,254 passengers.

Among direct operators, Biman Bangladesh Airlines accounted for 23 affected flights, Saudia 19, and US-Bangla Airlines and Riyadh Air 10 each.

Among connecting carriers, IndiGo recorded 28 affected flights, Emirates 14, Qatar Airways nine, flydubai eight, SalamAir seven, Air India six and EgyptAir one.

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

## Japan to arrange $6.35b

FROM PAGE 1

it an attractive investment destination, Nikkei said.

With around 170 million people, the world's eighth-largest population, Bangladesh also offers a large consumer market, the report said.

Japan has long supported Bangladesh through official development assistance and is now showing a willingness to expand its role through private-sector investment, Nikkei added.

The Daily Star could not independently verify the report.

## Students who failed SSC

FROM PAGE 3

Two days later, Dhaka Education Board Chairman Prof Syed Akhtaruzzaman said introducing supplementary exams for the 2026 SSC was impractical, citing the need for new policies covering question preparation, examinations and college admissions. The boards were seeking to introduce the system next year.

On October 13, Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon said the government planned retests within 15 days of SSC results being published for students failing up to two subjects. He did not specify when the system would begin.

## 7 Qawmi parties to work together

FROM PAGE 3

belonging to other political alliances will have to leave those alliances. No such decision was taken at today's meeting," he said.

According to meeting sources, a 21-member liaison committee, comprising three representatives from each of the seven parties, has also been formed.

Jalaluddin Ahmed said the next meeting, scheduled for December 5, would discuss future activities in greater detail.

# Create central database to track road crash deaths

## Demand youth organisations



PHOTO: **COURTESY**

**UNB,** *Dhaka*

Youth representatives from various organisations have urged the government to launch a unified national database to ensure accurate reporting of road crash fatalities and injuries and strengthen preventive measures.

They stressed that discrepancies in data reported by government and non-government organisations make it difficult to determine the actual toll of road crashes and formulate effective, evidence-based policies. The demand was made through a press release issued yesterday to mark Road Safety Day.

The press release said, according to the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), 5,490 people were killed in road crashes in 2025, while Bangladesh Passenger Welfare Association reported 9,111 deaths and 14,812 injuries in 6,729 crashes.

Another set of figures for the same year recorded 7,584 crashes, resulting in 7,359 deaths and 16,476 injuries. Significant discrepancies were also observed in fatality figures for 2024.

According to the youth organisations, a centralised database containing information on the location, time and type of road crashes, vehicles involved, road conditions, and the number of people killed or injured would help identify high-risk roads and the causes of crashes, enabling more effective preventive measures.

It would also facilitate the assessment of road safety initiatives and strengthen accountability.

# Africa faces 'complex' Ebola outbreak after spread to Nigeria: WHO

**AFP,** *Lagos*

The World Health Organization (WHO) warned yesterday that Africa faced a "complex" Ebola outbreak after the virus crossed from east Africa to Nigeria, which has reported the first case in the west of the continent.

Nigeria on Tuesday announced an imported case of the Bundibugyo strain behind a major DR Congo Ebola outbreak, in a woman, a wife of a diplomat who had a history of travel to Uganda.

The continent's most populous nation is the fourth African country affected by the outbreak, which this week came to span the continent, with Kenya in the east reporting nine cases since October 6.

The outbreak began in the Democratic Republic of Congo and has become the deadliest in the country's history, killing more than 4,000 people out of more than 9,000 confirmed cases since mid-May, according to health authorities.

It is caused by the Bundibugyo strain of the virus, for which there is still neither a vaccine nor a specific treatment.

"We are facing a more complex outbreak landscape. Nigeria has confirmed an imported case of Ebola virus disease," Mohamed Janabi, regional director for WHO in Africa, told an online media briefing.

The patient in Nigeria returned to the capital Abuja on October 3 after being in Uganda since September 16, the WHO representative in Nigeria Pavel Ursu said.

She flew to Abuja on an Ethiopian Airlines flight and transited through Addis Ababa, an emergency meeting of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) heard on Wednesday.

The woman is originally from Uganda but based in Abuja, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention Director General Jean Kaseya told AFP yesterday.

**The continent's most populous nation is the fourth African country affected by the outbreak.**

He also said she did not go to the DRC, as suggested earlier by Ugandan authorities.

Africa CDC's Kaseya has already warned of "an extremely serious threat", with fatality rates fast edging towards 50 percent in the DRC.

The Nigerian case has reignited memories of a widespread outbreak in 2014 that struck several countries in the region and killed more than 11,000 people across west Africa between late 2013 and 2016.

## PM's Mongla visit raises dev hopes for southwest

FROM PAGE 3

Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, state ministers Aninda Islam Amit and Shaikh Faridul Islam, Whip Rakibul Islam and other senior officials were present.

After the meeting, Tarique inspected Mongla Port's jetty facilities and operations before visiting the proposed economic zone site planned by the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA).

He returned to Dhaka by helicopter around 5:00pm.

BNP leader Hafizur Rahman Tuhin said the port's development, the proposed LNG terminal near Akram Point and the economic zone would boost the regional economy. He also called for improved jetty facilities and dredging.

Md Julfikar Ali, general secretary of the Mongla Port Berth and Ship Operators' Association, said floating storage regasification unit facilities would support energy supplies and industrial growth.

Sheikh Sahed Ali Robi, president of the Bagerhat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, called for regular dredging to maintain the port channel's navigability and modernisation of customs services.

State Minister Faridul said industrialisation and investment centred on Mongla Port would create jobs and improve livelihoods, including for people affected by climate change.

He said coordinated development of the port, economic zone and Sundarbans tourism would help turn the region into a major trade and investment hub.

## 407 foreigners in Bangladesh jails

FROM PAGE 3

Prison sources said the foreign nationals were detained in connection with offences including drug trafficking, gold smuggling, fraud, counterfeit dollar trading, passport-related offences, illegal VoIP businesses and human trafficking.

"They cannot return because clearance from the respective countries has not arrived," Masud Hasan Jewel, jailer (media and logistics), told The Daily Star.

He said prison authorities were regularly informing the Ministry of Home Affairs about the matter.

According to prison officials, the names, addresses and other details of the prisoners have been sent to the embassies concerned in Dhaka. Letters have also been forwarded through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but responses have been inadequate.

An official of the Consular Wing of the High Commission of India (HCI) in Dhaka, however, said 25 verified Indian nationals who had completed their sentences were awaiting repatriation from Bangladeshi prisons.

The mission has requested the foreign ministry to expedite their return and communicate proposed repatriation dates well in advance to facilitate arrangements with Indian authorities.

The official said Bangladesh's foreign ministry had also shared lists of 121 reportedly Indian prisoners who had completed their sentences.

"However, the personal particulars of the majority of these reportedly Indian prisoners are insufficient to enable verification of their Indian nationality."

The HCI has sought consular access to prisoners whose details are insufficient to verify their nationality.

"The HCI is awaiting a response from the foreign ministry. There are also some cases where sufficient information is available, but the nationality verification process is still ongoing."

The Daily Star contacted the Myanmar Embassy in Bangladesh several times by email but received no response.

Prison officials said prolonged detention of foreign nationals after completion of their sentences was creating logistical difficulties and imposing additional costs on the government.

According to the Prison Department, foreign prisoners are kept in separate cells for security reasons, with CCTV cameras monitoring the areas outside their wards.

The issue drew attention after six Chinese nationals were arrested at a hotel in Cox's Bazar on September 4 in connection with alleged online fraud.

Earlier, in January, the cyber unit of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Detective Branch arrested eight people, including five Chinese nationals, on similar allegations.

## HRSS seeks probe into ministries' roles

FROM PAGE 3

according to family), were executed in Makkah.

HRSS called for an impartial investigation into possible negligence or coordination failures and demanded to know why the authorities were not informed of the executions in time.

It also demanded that the government obtain and publicly disclose the case records from Saudi authorities, including details of the charges, trials, opportunities to present a defence, legal assistance, sentences and executions.

The organisation said the two ministries should publicly explain their roles and any shortcomings in handling the cases. It called for legal action and punishment in accordance with the law if negligence or failure to discharge official duties is established through an independent investigation.

HRSS also urged the government to prepare an updated list of Bangladeshis imprisoned abroad and ensure qualified lawyers, consular access and opportunities for lawful appeals for those facing death sentences or serious criminal charges.

It called for assistance to the families of the deceased and better coordination among ministries, embassies and consulates to ensure timely information about arrests, trials and sentences.

## Curbs on secretariat visitor

FROM PAGE 3

The official said some passes issued under successive governments for political reasons remained in use.

"Although they are issued in the names of businessmen and contractors, we will not make a decision on this; it must come from the political level."

However, no changes are being considered for retired officials' passes. Secretaries, additional secretaries and joint secretaries retain lifelong access to the secretariat after retirement.

Home ministry sources said at least 27,000 access cards are held by employees working inside and outside the secretariat, while around 2,500 visitors enter daily using one-time passwords (OTPs).

At least 7,000 passes have also been issued, including temporary passes for contractors, businessmen, former officials and people working on projects under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

Under existing rules, secretaries can issue five daily passes, additional secretaries three and joint secretaries two. Ministers and state ministers can issue 10 each.

The secretariat is one of the country's key points of interest.

Previous prime ministers generally worked from the Prime Minister's Office, visiting the secretariat for cabinet meetings and other important discussions.

Since taking office, Tarique Rahman has worked from the secretariat almost every day, occasionally holding meetings at the Prime Minister's Office on Saturdays.

However, security arrangements have largely remained unchanged.

The Cabinet Division recently issued a nine-point directive to the home ministry to tighten security and regulate visitor access to the secretariat.

## Rising heat takes a toll on maternal, child health

FROM PAGE 3

extreme heat. It also identifies school attendance as a possible indicator of heat's impact on children.

The indicators cover maternal and child health monitoring, public-health surveillance, climate and health monitoring, and heat exposure.

The agencies said combining health records with temperature data could help detect unusual increases in complications during heatwaves, investigate possible links and improve preventive measures and hospital preparedness.

"What health systems do not count, they cannot respond to," said Dr Pascale Allotey, director of the WHO's Department of Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing.

In May 2024, the Directorate General of Health Services, with Unicef support, issued national guidelines on heat-related illness, identifying pregnant women as particularly vulnerable.

The guidelines recommend monitoring cases by age, gender and pregnancy status, and managing complications such as preterm labour and pre-eclampsia.

Bangladesh's maternal and perinatal death surveillance system now covers all 64 districts, according to a report published on October 8.

The WHO framework recommends analysing such health data alongside weather observations to identify possible changes in pregnancy and newborn outcomes.

The agencies urged countries to strengthen heat-health action plans and early-warning systems to protect pregnant women, infants and children.

DAILY LIFE BLUES

# Dhaka's traffic chaos

## Why fair enforcement is essential to law's existence

KHALID KHAN



*Khalid Khan works as a Law Desk Assistant at Law & Our Rights, The Daily Star.*



PHOTO: **PRABIR DAS**

Dhaka is the noisy, chaotic capital of Bangladesh. Whenever you go out for a walk, you will always find its footpaths occupied by hawkers, often illegally, without having to pay any legal fee. A formal shopkeeper, in contrast, has to obtain trade permission, pay rents, taxes, and utility bills for carrying on his business in commercial spaces. Similarly, it is all the more convenient to park a car on the street illegally than to find a legal parking spot, which costs you money. The unfit buses emitting black smoke often get away with their non-compliance, whereas the fit ones have to bear the cost of renovation, production of fitness certificates, etc. These scenes appear far too common. But rarely do we ask what led the city to fall into such disarray.

The recent advent of e-rickshaws makes the asymmetry more apparent. While a licensed vehicle owner has to face legal hurdles for violating the traffic rules, the same does not apply to the unlicensed, unregulated e-rickshaws. With weak brakes, high speeds, and a lack of control, they often imperil the lives of pedestrians, especially children on the streets. Seeing all these irregularities and asymmetric application of law, one may be tempted to breach the law rather than to comply with it. Anarchy in Dhaka thus seems the natural conclusion for rational actors.

This apparent chaos in Dhaka can be explained using HLA Hart's concept of *sanction*. Hart was one of the most influential legal theorists of the last century. In his *magnum opus* 'The Concept of Law', in which he developed his own theory of legal positivism, Hart devoted a significant portion of the book to critiquing Austin, one of the earliest proponents of legal positivism. Austin defined law as the command of the sovereign backed by *sanction*. By *sanction*, he meant the pain or punishment inflicted upon a person in case of non-compliance with a sovereign command. Its purpose is to provide the motivation for abiding by law. Without a sanction, there can be no command; without command, there can be no law at all. Thus, sanction plays an essential role in Austin's legal theory.

Contrarily, Hart showed that sanction is not always necessary for the existence of law since people may obey the law, not out of fear of harm, but out of respect for the authority or being morally obliged. But Hart discovered something more to it. Despite being a legal positivist, who viewed law merely as a system of rules devoid of moral content, Hart conceded that a few rules of conduct must exist in order for any community to survive. They have their foundations in the human condition itself and are thus named as '*the minimum content of natural law.*' These are derived from the five truisms about ourselves: (1) we are all vulnerable to each other, (2) we are approximately equal in powers, (3) we are selfish (limited altruism), in general, (4) we have limited resources, (5) we suffer from limited understanding and strength of will.

These limitations necessitate the formulation of some rules for the protection of life and property. However, the fifth truism is particularly useful to explain the situation in Dhaka. Because of our limitations in the understanding of the world along with our limited strength of will, we are often tempted to pursue our own immediate interests without considering their far-reaching consequences. This requires the establishment of social organisations for detecting and punishing them *(sanction)*, without which many would succumb to such temptations.

Notably, the sanction Hart refers to here is different from the one Austin developed. According to Hart, the object of punishment *(sanction)* is not to supply the motive for obedience but to serve as a 'guarantee that those who would voluntarily obey shall not be sacrificed to those who would not'. In other words, sanction exists so that a person is not put at a greater disadvantage for obeying the law than the one who violates it. Thus, Hart pointed out that the lack of sanction does not nullify the existence of law (as Austin described) but may reduce its efficacy.

Dhaka, if not the whole of Bangladesh, is facing the same crisis that Hart had warned us about. Due to the limitations in our human nature, there is always a temptation to breach the law for immediate self-interest. However, the social organisations exist so that such violations do not go unpunished. When law imposes sanctions on a particular class of people while others remain unchecked, it not only engenders disparity but also endangers the proper functioning of a society. This also shows why enforcement of law is necessary to a certain extent in order to create a viable social organisation. Because, in the absence of the threat of sanction, breaking the law becomes more profitable than abiding by it. The result is complete chaos, as we now see in Dhaka.



AI GENERATED IMAGE

LAW VIEWS

# How ADR can play a bigger role in criminal cases

ASHRAFUL ISLAM PLABON

An agreement of 9 lakh taka has not stopped the legal controversy and the case around the recent Baridhara road crash. A 17-year-old boy accused of driving the car that killed construction worker Mehedi Hasan Mim was refused bail by a Dhaka juvenile court on 4 October. A report forwarded by the police to the court says investigators reviewed CCTV footage of the scene and surrounding areas, and it shows that the teenager was involved. The case brings up a question: when can a criminal case be settled by an agreement between the people involved, and when should the State continue with the trial?

In the civil justice system of Bangladesh, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is firmly embedded in the form of mediation, arbitration, and conciliation, especially in sections 89A to 89E of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908. But its application in the criminal justice system is not so widespread. However, delays due to case backlogs, shortage of judges, and problems of obtaining witness evidence should prompt one to wonder whether ADR can play a bigger role in criminal cases as well.

Compounding of offences, as per section 345 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, is a significant form of criminal ADR. Compounding implies a compromise arrangement between the alleged victim and the accused to terminate the criminal procedure. However, simply because the two parties wish the criminal proceeding to end does not make it legal.

Section 345 identifies offences that may be compounded. In general, there are two categories: section 345(1) lists offences that are compoundable without the permission of the court, and section 345(2) deals with offences that require the court's permission. Offences with a clear public element cannot automatically be converted into private offences simply because some form of compensation has been made. Under Section 345(6), lawful compounding results in the acquittal of the accused person with whom the offence is compounded.

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh also recognised the importance of compromise within the statutory framework in *Md Joynal* v *Md Rustom Ali* (1984). The case is frequently cited in discussions of compromise as a form of ADR.

Coming back to the Baridhara case, the action was brought under sections 98 and 105 of the Road Transport Act, 2018. Section 117 of the 2018 Act makes the offences mentioned under sections 66, 72, 75, 87, 89 and 92 compoundable, while sections 98 and 105 are not compoundable. Hence, I believe even when the relatives of the deceased accept Tk 9 lakh voluntarily, the private compromise cannot end the proceeding.

**Section 345 identifies offences that may be compounded. In general, there are two categories: section 345(1) lists offences that are compoundable without the permission of the court, and section 345(2) deals with offences that require the court's permission.**

However, the punishment provided under sections 98 and 105 is noteworthy as well. Section 98 provides imprisonment for a term which shall not exceed three years, or a fine not exceeding Tk 3 lakh, or both, and such fine may be paid in whole or in part to the aggrieved party by the court. Under section 105, an offender is liable to imprisonment for a term which shall not exceed five years, or a fine not exceeding Tk 5 lakh, or both. The reason behind considering the settlement of Tk 9 lakh as an ADR issue may be that the said settlement is above the maximum limit of fine prescribed in both the sections. The question thus arises whether there exists any mechanism within the legal system which can allow this allegedly voluntary settlement on the part of the victims' family?

However, this is not to suggest that such issues can simply be swept aside. For Bangladesh, there could be a system where a judge ensures that compensation, consent, and the interests of the victim are considered while giving the government the right to ensure that the state interest is also protected. This discussion has become pertinent considering the amendment made in the Code of Criminal Procedure in 2026. Section 345(8) lays out that the court has the power to help in the compounding of compoundable offences when both parties agree to do so or refer the matter to the Legal Aid Officer or advocates. Such an agreement can be put on record and can be executed provided the rights of third parties are safeguarded.

It is also possible that Bangladesh may introduce a plea-bargaining scheme, which will be properly regulated. Contrary to compounding, plea bargaining will involve the acceptance of guilt in exchange for some legal bargain. Some examples of plea bargaining include charge bargaining, sentence bargaining, and fact bargaining, but it should be done very cautiously.

There is a need for criminal ADR in Bangladesh that should neither be dismissed completely nor considered without any caution. There is a need for a system in Bangladesh through which the minor crimes that deserve it can be disposed of through an efficient system, but the serious crimes must continue to attract public accountability. It is important for the courts to ensure that such agreements are made voluntarily, the parties are informed, and the agreements are legal, especially when vulnerable crime victims are forced to accept money. Only with sufficient safeguards in place will such a system work.

**Ashraful Islam Plabon** *is a law student at Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP).*

DHAKA FRIDAY OCTOBER 23, 2026, KARTIK 7, 1433 BS

# SPORT



PHOTO: AFP

## Brook smashes record ODI double ton

**England captain Harry Brook registered the fastest-ever double ton in ODIs yesterday, becoming the first Englishman to reach the landmark in the format. Brook's 116-ball 202 against Sri Lanka in the tri-series in Rawalpindi, also involving hosts Pakistan, helped England to 429 for four. Brook, however, ended on the losing side as Sri Lanka chased down the target with two wickets in hand and one ball to spare to register the second-highest successful chase in the format.**

**Fastest ODI double hundreds (by balls)**

**114** - Harry Brook vs SL, Rawalpindi, 2026
**117** - Shubman Gill vs WI, Guwahati, 2026
**126** - Ishan Kishan vs BAN, Chattogram, 2022
**128** - Glenn Maxwell vs AFG, Mumbai WS, 2023
**136** - Pathum Nissanka vs AFG, Pallekele, 2024



**Youngster Kalam Siddiqui Aleen celebrates his century against West Indies yesterday before scoring 135 as the BCB XI posted 371 for seven on the opening day of their two-day warm-up match at Anvir Cricket Stadium in Dhaka. The two-match Test series begins on October 28.** PHOTO: STAR

## Paz puts Red Devils to the sword



**Como's Nico Paz celebrates after scoring his second goal during their UEFA Champions League clash against Manchester United at the Stadio Giuseppe Sinigaglia yesterday. The Argentine's brace and an assist made him the youngest Argentine to be involved in three goals in a Champions League match since Lionel Messi in April 2009, achieving the feat at 22 years and 43 days. Goals from Tasos Douvikas and Jacobo Ramon completed a stunning 4-1 victory for Cesc Fabregas's side. Joshua Zirkzee's late strike spared United their joint-heaviest defeat in the competition, but extended the Red Devils' winless run to seven games. For Como, who have risen from Serie B to Europe's elite over the past three years, the result will go down as one of the greatest in the club's history.** PHOTO: REUTERS

**"That was one of the most beautiful games of my career, I'll never forget it.... It's more than what I had dreamed of."**
**Nico Paz,** Como midfielder

**"I think everybody's got to take responsibility for that [4-1 defeat]. I'll take responsibility for the overall team and performance, it stops with me and I'm fine with that."**
**Michael Carrick,** Man United head coach

## Fear of failure gripping Tigers?

SPORTS REPORTER

Zimbabwe and Afghanistan will contest the UAE ODI Tri-Series final today while Bangladesh watch from the sidelines, left to rue a missed opportunity. After a 99-run thrashing by Zimbabwe, the Tigers still had a route to the final, but needed to beat Afghanistan first on Wednesday.

Instead, an early collapse and a failure to capitalise on chances to regain momentum left Bangladesh all out for 160 in a seven-wicket defeat that ended their campaign. The manner of the loss pointed to a team struggling to handle pressure, with fear of failure creeping into its game.

"The team showed a fear of failure which significantly impacts how the game will be played. It was painful to see the approach in the Afghanistan game. It was becoming apparent during the game that fear of failure gripped them," a team management official told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh once dominated both Zimbabwe and Afghanistan, but that advantage has faded. They won 10 of 16 ODIs against Afghanistan through 2023 but have lost five in a row since November 2024, their worst run against them. The latest defeat leaves Afghanistan ahead 12-11 in 23 meetings. Zimbabwe have also won five of the last seven ODIs against Bangladesh, including two consecutive series.

The concern extends beyond the tri-series. Bangladesh have won four of their last seven ODI series, against West Indies, Pakistan, New Zealand and Australia. All three defeats came away from home. Their last bilateral series win abroad was against Ireland in May 2023, and they have since lost six consecutive away series, including a 3-0 whitewash in the West Indies. They have won just four of their last 19 away ODIs.



- Bangladesh won 10 of 16 ODIs through 2023 but have lost five consecutive matches since November 2024. They have lost five of their last seven ODIs against Zimbabwe.
- Bangladesh were bowled out inside 50 overs in 28 of 86 innings batting first between 2010 and 2020 (32%). Since 2023, that has risen to 14 of 35 innings (40%).

Stand-in skipper Tawhid Hridoy has also highlighted the gap between Bangladesh's ambitions and their performances.

"Whenever we play a big series, tri-nation, Asia Cup, or World Cup... personally, and as a team, everyone wants to win a trophy. This hunger is in everyone. We only say it, but our actions don't reflect it," he said after the defeat that knocked Bangladesh out.

The batting numbers underline the problem. Between 2010 and 2020, Bangladesh were bowled out inside 50 overs in 28 of 86 innings batting first, around 32 per cent. Since 2023, that figure has risen to 14 of 35 innings, or 40 per cent.

ODI batting demands a balance between Powerplay aggression, consolidation through the middle overs and acceleration in the final 15. Yet Bangladesh's top six against Afghanistan included four openers, leaving the batting order looking like square pegs in round holes.

Nor has the team settled on alternatives. Seventeen batters have occupied positions four to seven in the past two years, with Saif Hassan, Jaker Ali, Afif Hossain, Nurul Hasan and Shamim Hossain appearing in and out of the side. Mosaddek Hossain, brought into the middle-order picture after a successful Australia series, has also struggled to retain his place after seven matches.

Ahead of bigger ODI assignments, they need a settled middle order and the composure to recover when things go wrong. Otherwise, the fear of failure could continue to undermine their ambitions.

**SHORT CORNER**

## Aliss reported for suspect action

Bangladesh off-spinner Aliss Al Islam has been reported with a suspect bowling action during the United Arab Emirates (UAE) ODI Tri-Series match against Afghanistan in Sharjah on Wednesday. Aliss made his ODI debut in the match, conceding 47 runs in 8.3 overs without taking a wicket as Bangladesh lost by seven wickets and crashed out of the tournament, which also involves Zimbabwe. Aliss will undergo an independent assessment of his bowling action at an ICC-accredited testing centre in accordance with the ICC Illegal Bowling Action Regulations.

## Nat'l Badminton C'ship begins today

A total of 616 shuttlers from 88 teams will compete in the 40th National Badminton Championship 2026, which gets underway at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium in Dhaka today, with Tk 10 lakh in prize money and a motorcycle for the best player.

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

**WHAT TO WATCH**

**T SPORTS**
Bangladesh Football League
Brothers Vs Abahani
Live from 2:45 pm
UAE ODI Tri-Series
Final: Afghanistan vs Zimbabwe
Live from 5:30 pm
LaLiga
Alaves vs Malaga
Live from 1:00 am (Saturday)



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

**Tall Indian defenders block a Bangladesh player's attempt at goal during the final of the Begum Khaleda Zia IHF Nations Trophy at the Shaheed Captain M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium in Paltan yesterday. Bangladesh fought hard but eventually suffered a 28-16 defeat as India clinched the four-nation women's handball tournament title unbeaten.**

## Bavuma brilliance fuels Proteas revival

STAR SPORTS DESK

South Africa battled rain, a batting collapse and Australia's resistance to produce a remarkable turnaround, notching an innings-and-31-run victory in the second Test at St George's Park in Gqeberha yesterday to level the three-match series 1-1.

With five of the 15 scheduled sessions washed out, the Proteas had little room for error after losing the opening Test in Durban last week. Yet, from being reduced to 110 for six in their first innings, captain Temba Bavuma's career-best 179 and a relentless bowling display carried them to a commanding win.

The hosts had been put into bat and were struggling at 20 for two on the opening day before further rain interruptions curtailed proceedings, as Australia appeared firmly in control.

Bavuma, however, stood tall when his team needed him most, finding crucial support from Marco Jansen and Simon Harmer, who both scored half-centuries as South Africa declared at 425 for nine.

Jansen then ripped through Australia with a five-wicket haul, bowling the visitors out for just 99 and forcing them to follow on for the first time since 2019.

Australia fought back through Travis Head's 121 and a 40 off 166 balls from nightwatchman Scott Boland. But Wiaan Mulder dismissed both on the final day before Jansen removed Josh Hazlewood to seal the victory, despite another session being lost to rain.

Bavuma, who described his 179 as one of his best knocks, took pride in the team's ability to grind down the opposition.



"We saw throughout the match that batting was difficult. Take a lot of pride in that," Bavuma said.

"When we were batting, it was about how we can extend it for another hour, another session. Once the opportunity is there, wanted to be a lot more ruthless. That's how we play our cricket."

Australia skipper Pat Cummins acknowledged that his side were "a long way away from our best."

The victory extended Proteas' impressive record after enforcing the follow-on: they have now won 28 of 33 such Tests, with the other five ending in draws.

Gqeberha also remains a difficult venue for Australia, who have not won there since 1997. It is only the second Test venue outside England where they have suffered five defeats, joining Karachi. With the series level, the teams head to Cape Town next week for a decider.







SCRAPPING BRT

# Don't put people thru more pain

## Planners warn of even more waste of money

HELEMUL ALAM

Abandoning the Dhaka-Gazipur Bus Rapid Transit project could increase public expenditure, prolong traffic disruption, and forfeit potential public transport benefits, said Bangladesh Institute of Planners, questioning the decision's rationale.

After the decision was made at a cabinet meeting on October 18, the BIP issued a statement, demanding its withdrawal.

**After 14 years and Tk 2,810 crore already spent, the country's first dedicated 20.5km BRT project has been scrapped, with the government deciding to convert the corridor into a six-lane road.**

The institute described the move to convert the existing BRT infrastructure into a conventional highway as a "black day" for sustainable, energy-efficient, and inclusive public transport.

After 14 years and Tk 2,810 crore already spent, the country's first dedicated 20.5km BRT project has been scrapped, with the government deciding to convert the corridor into a six-lane road.

Under the plan, BRT stations, lane dividers, and other related infrastructure will be dismantled to make way for three lanes of general traffic in each direction. Two existing two-lane

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NATURE QUEST




**A little spiderhunter hovers beside a cluster of pinkish-white flowers, its wings spread wide as its long, curved bill probes for nectar in Chattogram's Fatikchhari. Native to South and Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh, this member of the sunbird family inhabits tropical forests, forest edges and plantations. Despite its name, it feeds not only on spiders but also on other insects and nectar. Its slender, downward-curved bill allows it to probe deep into flowers, pollinating them as it feeds. Classified as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List, the species remains widespread, although deforestation and habitat loss threaten its populations.** PHOTO: RASHED KHANZ

# 'For how long will we gain experience?'

Swapna Khatun broke a 22-year-old national record in women's long jump before earning her place at the recently concluded Asian Games, where she set an international personal best but finished 15th among 16 competitors. The former BKSP student spoke to The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman about her performance, ambitions and the challenges facing sports in the country. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:



**The Daily Star (DS):** How do you assess your Asian Games performance?

**Swapna Khatun (SK):** My 5.69 metres was an international personal best, but fell short of my national record of 6.25 metres, set at the National Athletics Championships in May. I was jumping over six metres in practice in Japan, so I cannot fully explain my performance. However, continuous rain and adverse weather affected me badly.

The Asian Games also showed me that we are not far behind other countries in athletic ability. The difference lies in the support systems. Foreign athletes had better access to physiotherapy, nutrition and training facilities. Thailand's top sprinter, for instance, had two dedicated physiotherapists during warm-ups, while we lacked adequate support.

**DS:** How much preparation is needed to compete internationally?

**SK:** It is unrealistic to expect strong results with only one to three months of preparation. Physical conditioning alone requires at least one and a half to three months. Rushing increases injury risks and prevents the body from adapting properly. Success requires long-term preparation, just as exams require regular study rather than last-minute cramming.

**DS:** How do Bangladesh's facilities and nutritional support compare internationally?

**SK:** There is a significant gap. Our organisations provide some assistance, but it is not enough. We often spend our own salaries on proper diets and nutrition, with expenses rising before major competitions.

Athletes outside the Bangladesh Army must travel long distances to reach the practice ground at the National Stadium.

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# Private bank top brass may helm state banks

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is considering appointing managing directors and top executives from private sector banks to helm state-owned banks, as it looks to inject dynamism into the lenders, all of which are struggling save for one.

At present, the post of MD at state-owned lenders Sonali, Janata, Agrani, Rupali, Bangladesh Development Bank (BDBL) and BASIC is vacant.

The finance ministry has already sent proposals for appointing new MDs for Agrani, BASIC and BDBL to the Prime Minister's Office for approval. If approved, the appointments may be finalised next week.

Among the remaining three banks, the government is considering hiring top executives from private banks for one or two of them, The Daily Star has learnt from Financial Institutions Division (FID) officials involved with the proceedings.

The government has already begun informal discussions with additional MD-level executives from several private banks.

"State-owned banks possess a massive amount of surplus liquidity, and the government wants to boost investment. Therefore, entrepreneurial bankers are needed for these banks," said one of the officials.

On the other hand, except for one bank, the financial condition of all the banks is poor, so the private banks' executives' professionalism, efficiency and dynamism can help stage a turnaround.

Earlier on October 19, the FID revised its policy for appointing chief executives of the six state-owned commercial banks, allowing an experience requirement to be waived in exceptional cases.

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## NEWS IN FOCUS

### Turf war leaves one killed, 5 hurt in Kalkini

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Shariatpur*

A man was killed and at least five others injured in a clash between two groups fighting to establish dominance in Madaripur's Kalkini upazila yesterday, said police.

The deceased, Taizul Sardar, 24, a resident of Madaripur Sadar upazila, was accused in multiple cases, including two murder cases, Jahangir Alam, additional superintendent of police (crime and investigation) in Madaripur, told The Daily Star.

The incident took place at Kaliganj Bazar in Alinagar union around 9:30am.

According to witnesses, four

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### Mob kills paralysed man in city hospital

**They labelled him child kidnapper**

SHAHEEN MOLLAH *and* DIPAN NANDY



For nearly 20 years, Alam Sheikh worked at a garment factory in Gazipur, supporting his wife and three children.

But a stroke that paralysed the right side of his body forced him to leave his job. For the next two years,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
মৎস্য অধিদপ্তর, বাংলাদেশ
মৎস্য ভবন, রমনা, ঢাকা
একান্ত শাখা
www.fisheries.gov.bd

প্রকাশিত সংবাদের বিষয়ে মৎস্য অধিদপ্তরের ব্যাখ্যা ও প্রতিবাদ

দেশের একটি স্বনামধন্য পত্রিকায় ২১ অক্টোবর ২০২৬ তারিখে প্রকাশিত 'তিন কোটি টাকার মাছ ছাড়তে খরচ ৪৫ কোটি' শীর্ষক প্রতিবেদনে বিল নার্সারি কার্যক্রমের ব্যয়কে পোনা কেনার সম্পূর্ণ ব্যয় হিসেবে উল্লেখ এবং প্রকল্পের অন্যান্য উন্নয়ন কার্যক্রমের ব্যয়কে পোনা ছাড়ার ব্যয় হিসেবে উপস্থাপন করায় প্রকল্পের উদ্দেশ্য ও ব্যয়কাঠামো সম্পর্কে বিভ্রান্তির সুযোগ তৈরি হয়েছে।

যশোর, ঝিনাইদহ, চুয়াডাঙ্গা ও কুষ্টিয়ার ২৯টি বাঁওড়ের জন্য প্রস্তাবিত "নির্বাচিত বাঁওড় এলাকায় সমাজভিত্তিক মৎস্যসম্পদ ব্যবস্থাপনা" শীর্ষক প্রকল্পটি প্রকৃত মৎস্যজীবীদের অংশগ্রহণে সমাজভিত্তিক ব্যবস্থাপনার মাধ্যমে বাস্তবায়িত হবে। নব্বইয়ের দশকে গঠিত সমিতিগুলোর সদস্যতালিকা হালনাগাদ, প্রকৃত মৎস্যজীবীদের অন্তর্ভুক্তি এবং স্বচ্ছ হিসাব ও সুফলবন্টনের মাধ্যমে সমাজভিত্তিক ব্যবস্থাপনা সুসংগঠিত করা এর অন্যতম উদ্দেশ্য।

পলি পড়ে ভরাট হয়ে যাওয়ায় গভীরতা ও পানি ধারণক্ষমতা বাড়িয়ে শুষ্ক মৌসুমসহ সারা বছর পানি ধরে রাখার উপযোগী মাছের আবাসস্থল গড়ে তোলার লক্ষ্যে প্রকল্পে বাঁওড়ের নির্বাচিত অংশ খননে ১১ কোটি ২১ লাখ ৯৫ হাজার টাকা প্রস্তাব করা হয়েছে। পাশাপাশি দেশীয় প্রজাতির মাছের সংরক্ষণ ও প্রজনন অব্যাহত রাখার লক্ষ্যে ২৯টি অভয়াশ্রম প্রতিষ্ঠায় ২ কোটি ৩২ লাখ টাকার সংস্থান রয়েছে। বিদ্যমান ৩৫টি পোনা উৎপাদন পুকুর সংস্কারে ১ কোটি ৭৩ লাখ ৩৯ হাজার টাকা, যান্ত্রিকীকরণে ১ কোটি ৪০ লাখ টাকা এবং ছয়টি গভীর নলকূপ স্থাপনে ১ কোটি ২০ লাখ টাকা প্রস্তাব করা হয়েছে। এসব কার্যক্রমের উদ্দেশ্য পোনা উৎপাদনের অবকাঠামো ও পানি সরবরাহব্যবস্থা উন্নয়ন করা। জরাজীর্ণ ছয়টি বাঁওড় ব্যবস্থাপকের অফিস ভবন পুনঃনির্মাণে প্রস্তাবিত ৭ কোটি ৩১ লাখ ৮ হাজার টাকা প্রশিক্ষণ, পোনা সরবরাহ ও সম্প্রসারণসেবার অবকাঠামো উন্নয়নের অংশ।

সংবাদে উল্লিখিত ২ কোটি ৯০ লাখ টাকা পাঁচ বছরে ২৯০টি বিল নার্সারি স্থাপন কার্যক্রমের ব্যয়। এর বাইরে রুইজাতীয় ও দেশীয় মাছের পোনা অবমুক্তকরণে পৃথকভাবে ৭ কোটি ৬১ লাখ ৯০ হাজার টাকার সংস্থান রাখা হয়েছে। আবার আট লাখ টাকার সরঞ্জাম খাতে চারটি ডেস্কটপের সঙ্গে দুটি ল্যাপটপ, চারটি প্রিন্টার ও আনুষঙ্গিক সরঞ্জাম অন্তর্ভুক্ত রয়েছে। প্রকাশিত সংবাদে সম্পূর্ণ অঙ্ককে চারটি ডেস্কটপের মূল্য হিসেবে দেখানো যথাযথ নয়। প্রকল্পে মাছের উৎপাদন ১০ শতাংশ বৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্য রয়েছে। এ বৃদ্ধি অর্জিত ও অব্যাহত থাকলে প্রকল্প সমাপ্তির পরও অতিরিক্ত উৎপাদন ও আয়ের সুফল পাওয়া যাবে। উল্লিখিত অঙ্কগুলো প্রস্তাবিত ব্যয়। অবকাঠামোর প্রয়োজনীয়তা, সরঞ্জামের স্পেসিফিকেশন ও দর, জনবল যথাযথ মূল্যায়ন ও যৌক্তিকীকরণের বিষয়। উল্লেখ্য যে, প্রস্তাবিত প্রকল্পটির মূল্যায়ন সভা (পিইসি) এখনো অনুষ্ঠিত হয়নি।

অসম্পূর্ণ ব্যয়চিত্র উপস্থাপনে জনমনে বিভ্রান্তি এবং মৎস্য অধিদপ্তর ও সরকারের ভাবমূর্তি ক্ষুণ্ন হওয়ার আশঙ্কা সৃষ্টি হয়েছে।

২১.১০.২০২৬
(ড. মোঃ খালেদ কনক)
মহাপরিচালক (ভারপ্রাপ্ত)
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**Motorcycles parked at a workshop in Mirpur yesterday to have number plates installed at the front. The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority directed all motorcycles to have front registration plates by November 15.** PHOTO: PRABIR DAS