

Protesters clash with riot police during a national anti-government demonstration called by the student-led protest movement to demand better support for education and prime minister's resignation in central Tirana, Albania yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Climate finance must come as grants, not loans

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Shama Obaed Islam said, "Bangladesh's carbon emissions are extremely limited, almost negligible, yet the country remains a victim."

She said Bangladesh would raise the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and children, particularly their health and sanitation needs, at COP31.

"Those who suffer most are women and children. Their particular vulnerabilities, along with issues related to health and sanitation, must be addressed with the utmost importance."

Countries like Bangladesh need adequate funding to address the suffering and loss of life caused by climate change in coastal, rural and urban areas. But that funding must be provided as grants not loans, she said.

She said Bangladesh aims to generate 20 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and 30 percent by 2040.

SM Munjurul Hannan Khan, executive director of Nature Conservation Management, said developing countries had submitted their climate plans but were still awaiting adequate funding, technology transfer and capacity-building support from historically responsible nations.

Prof Ahmad Kamruzzaman Majumder, director at Center for Atmospheric Pollution Studies, called for grant-based municipal financing, waste prevention measures, methane monitoring infrastructure and direct funding for city corporations to address climate housing needs.

Touhidul Islam, climate and water governance expert at WaterAid Bangladesh, warned that exceeding the 1.5°C warming threshold would have irreversible consequences.

He stressed the need to implement NDC commitments and urged developed countries to provide climate financing entirely through grants.

Roufa Khanum, deputy director at the Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research, said Bangladesh had demonstrated climate leadership by pledging a 20 percent emissions reduction by 2035 and allocating $25 billion from domestic sources.

She said achieving the country's climate targets would require $90 billion in international support and called for predictable, grant-based financing directly accessible to vulnerable countries and local authorities.

At the event, a position paper covering 13 themes, including zero waste management, the Paris Agreement, and youth and climate justice, was presented. It incorporated inputs from civil society organisations, NGOs, think tanks and 33 youth platforms.

Sexual assaults on madrasa children spark outrage

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next day, while another accused, Md Abdul Quddus Sheikh, 45, remains at large.

In Tongi, Moslem Ahmed, 30, teacher of Qariul Quran International Madrasa, allegedly sexually abused a seven-year-old Class-I girl on October 19, her family said.

Threatened with a beating if she spoke out, the girl stayed away from classes for three days before telling her parents.

Relatives and locals assaulted Moslem on October 21 before police rescued and detained him. The girl's father filed a case on October 22, when a court sent Moslem to jail.

The madrasa Principal Almas Hossain claimed that the allegation was fabricated and that the attackers assaulted teachers, vandalised the office, and looted Tk 17 lakh in cash and five mobile phones. The girl's father denied the looting allegation. Madrasa authorities filed a separate case on October 23.

In Savar, madrasa owner and headteacher Abdul Bari, 50, allegedly raped a 13-year-old residential student on October 21 and threatened to kill her if she spoke out.

His wife, Tohfa, 40, was detained that evening and arrested following a case filed on October 22 accusing her of aiding the rape and threatening the girl. Bari remains at large.

Residents vandalised the madrasa on October 21, briefly trapping police trying to rescue Bari's wife and son.

Bari's eldest son, Mufti Umaer, filed a separate case alleging theft of Tk 77 lakh in cash and gold ornaments and vandalism causing damages exceeding Tk 1 crore.

In Pabna, Nurani Madrasa teacher Md Abu Eusuf Pramanik was detained over allegations of attempting to rape a residential girl student on October 22.

The girl escaped and alerted locals, who assaulted him before handing him over to police. He was jailed after her family filed a case.

Residents vandalised and torched the madrasa early on October 23.

In Kushtia's Daulatpur, Darul Abbar Madrasa teacher Sayeed Hossain Nannu allegedly attempted to rape a Class-III girl on October 14 but fled when her screams alerted locals.

Her mother filed a complaint on October 20. Police arrested him, and a court sent him to jail on October 21.

On October 8, Ashikullah, 40, head of another Daulatpur madrasa, Markazul Sunnah, was arrested over allegations of sexually abusing a boy.

Thousands surrounded the madrasa, and several police personnel were injured trying to rescue him.

Police said Ashikullah was sent to jail.

Asked about the incidents in madrasas, Religious Affairs Minister Kazi Shah Mofazzal Hossain Kaikobad yesterday said the alleged abuse was "extremely distressing and shameful" and pledged preventive measures.

"We'll do whatever is necessary in this regard...," he told journalists after attending the triennial council session of the Bangladesh National Imam Association in Agargaon.

He said he had urged imams to explain permissible and forbidden conduct under Islamic teachings during Friday sermons.

The prime minister was also aware and had issued instructions to prevent such abuse, he added.

Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh, a Qawmi madrasa-based Islamist group, yesterday called for fair investigations and exemplary punishment over child abuse allegations and condemned some people's attempts to take the law into one's own hands.

In a statement, its Ameer Allama Muhibbullah Babunagari and Secretary General Sajedur Rahman said proper investigations, administrative action and punishment were essential to maintaining law and order.

Calling child sexual abuse a longstanding problem affecting schools, madrasas and other settings, they stressed the importance of children's safety and psychological well-being.

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) yesterday demanded stronger child protection in madrasas, impartial investigations, legal action and effective Sexual Harassment Prevention Committees in all educational institutions.

It warned that actual cases could be higher, as children often remain silent due to fear, stigma or pressure.

"No child should fear the people responsible for their care and education. When a child reports abuse, we must listen, take immediate action and ensure their safety," said MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam, urging parents to encourage disclosures and assure children of support.

Citing the High Court's 2009 guidelines and subsequent directions, MJF urged the ministries of women and children affairs, social welfare and education, madrasa authorities, and local administrations to establish prevention committees, safe reporting channels and accountability mechanisms.

Salma Ali, adviser to the Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers' Association, welcomed the protests but called them belated.

"Protests alone are not enough. We also want to see what the government does in response," she told The Daily Star.

Many cases, particularly in rural areas, never reach police or courts due to stigma, fear of further victimisation and local settlements, she said.

Concerned about abuse of boys at residential madrasas, particularly orphans who often remain silent, she recalled an earlier case involving an 11-year-old pregnant madrasa student.

She sought coordinated monitoring by the ministries of religious affairs, education, home, law, and women and children affairs and local authorities, alongside police training, effective investigations, safe accommodation, legal aid and rehabilitation.

Coordinated monitoring by the ministries of religious affairs, education, home, law, and women and children affairs and local authorities, alongside police training, effective investigations, safe accommodation, legal aid, and rehabilitation are needed to prevent these incidents.

Salma Ali, adviser to Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers' Association

"Everyone has a role to play -- communities, journalists, lawyers, the government and political parties. Without collective action, these incidents cannot be prevented," she said.

Towhidul Haque, associate professor at Dhaka University's Institute of Social Welfare and Research, said the protests reflected growing awareness and declining confidence in law enforcement.

Previously, accused teachers often escaped accountability through quiet settlements, apologies or promises not to reoffend, he said.

"Had the authorities taken legal action from the beginning, people would not have felt compelled to take the law into their own hands."

Warning that mob violence was no solution, he urged stronger institutional oversight, better teacher-student relationships, modern teaching practices and changes in institutional attitudes and culture.

(Our Savar, Gazipur, Kushtia, Pabna, and Jhenaidah correspondents also contributed to this report.)

Islamic leaders want peaceful Ijtema

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the congregation.

In response, he said he would consult the country's leading Islamic scholars before conveying his decision.

The press release said yesterday's meeting was arranged for this purpose, and the decision to place the two demands was taken based on the attendees' views.

Speakers at the briefing also warned of a nationwide movement if pressure was put on the government over the issue or any untoward situation arose.

Home minister busy with every ministry

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The opposition leader claimed that law and order had effectively broken down, with incidents of murder, rape, extortion and illegal land grabbing increasing daily.

He also alleged that the police administration was being used for partisan purposes.

Condemning corruption and extortion, Shafiqur said those involved in such activities did not truly belong to any political party and ultimately harmed themselves and their parties. Such individuals, he said, were the first to flee when their parties faced crises.

He also pledged to play an active role in parliament to improve infrastructure, educational institutions and healthcare services in Moulvibazar.

Journalist Shafiqur

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Dhaka Reporters Unity, Dhaka Union of Journalists and Parliament Journalists Association, expressed deep shock at his death.

Born on September 25, 1949, at Krishnapur village in Faridganj upazila of Chandpur, Shafiqur became involved in politics and social movements during his student life.

He began his journalism career as a Dhaka University correspondent for The Daily Ittefaq. After independence, he joined the newspaper full-time and worked there for 32 years before retiring in 2002.

Shafiqur served two consecutive terms as president of Jatiya Press Club from 2015 to 2018. He was elected MP from the Chandpur-4 constituency in the 11th parliamentary election in 2018 and re-elected in the 12th parliamentary election in 2024.

Memorial meeting held for Star journalist Sohrab Hossain

Speakers recall his professional dedication, social work

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A memorial meeting was held yesterday for Md Sohrab Hossain, The Daily Star's Patuakhali correspondent for more than 22 years and vice-president of the Patuakhali Press Club, at the Auliapur Noor-e-Madinah Mosque Complex in Patuakhali.

Speakers recalled Sohrab's professional dedication and involvement in social activities. They prayed for the salvation of his soul and expressed sympathy to his bereaved family.

Among those attending the meeting were Patuakhali Press Club President Md Zakir Hossain, local political leaders and academics.

Sohrab died of a heart attack on October 20 while undergoing treatment at Patuakhali Medical College Hospital.

He also worked as an assistant professor in the Bangla Department of South Muradia Women's Fazil Madrasa in Dumki upazila.

Following the meeting, a special prayer was offered.

Sohrab leaves behind his wife, two sons, a daughter, and many relatives and well-wishers.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Participants at the memorial meeting in Patuakhali.

Stranded at home

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Like Al-Amin, many Bangladeshi migrant workers face the risk of losing their jobs or having their visas expire as prolonged flight restrictions at Saudi Arabian airports continue to disrupt travel.

Those who returned home on approved leave are particularly vulnerable, as they must rejoin work within a stipulated period.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), 144 direct and transit flights have been affected by restricted operations at Saudi Arabian airports, disrupting the travel plans of 22,021 passengers. The latest figures, released yesterday, show that 67 direct flights and 77 transit flights have been affected.

Among direct operators, Biman Bangladesh Airlines accounted for 28 affected flights, Saudia 19, US-Bangla Airlines 10 and Riyadh Airways 10.

Among transit operators, IndiGo recorded 30 affected flights, Emirates 14, Qatar Airways nine, flydubai and Air India eight each, SalamAir seven and EgyptAir one.

A worker, requesting anonymity, said his employer had repeatedly asked him to return, but his October 17 flight was cancelled, leaving him unable to travel.

Another worker, scheduled to fly to Riyadh on October 19, said he was now trying to reach the Saudi capital via Madinah.

"We came home on leave for a fixed period. If we cannot return within that time, our employers may terminate our jobs," said another stranded worker.

Some passengers said they had spent Tk 2-4 lakh to secure jobs in Saudi Arabia, while repeated cancellations were forcing others to buy new tickets or seek alternative routes.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam said on Friday that the government was working with Saudi authorities to extend or renew visas and iqamas for Bangladeshis unable to return because of the conflict.

The government was also exploring rehabilitation and re-employment opportunities for those who had already lost their jobs, she told journalists.

Mostaq Ahmed, a member of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira), urged authorities to increase flights and arrange charter services.

"More flights should be operated through airports that remain operational, including Jeddah and Madinah," he said.

Meanwhile, Biman has suspended Riyadh flights until October 31 and Dammam services from October 23 to 25, citing security concerns following attacks on Saudi Arabian airports. Flights to Jeddah and Madinah are continuing.

CAAB has instructed airlines to provide timely flight updates and assistance with rebooking, refunds and visa-related matters.

Two Bangladeshis were killed and 26 others injured in separate missile strikes on airports in Riyadh and Dammam on October 10 and 21 respectively.

PRAYER TIMING
OCTOBER 25

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	4-50	12-45	4-00	5-32	7-15
JAMAAT	5-25	1-15	4-15	5-35	7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Bewildering convictions

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yesterday that the detainees had been arrested on allegations of drug consumption and disorderly conduct before being punished by a special court.

Asked under which law they were punished, he said the relevant magistrate would be able to explain the legal basis for the sentences.

However, a DB official closely involved in the operation, speaking on condition of anonymity, said police had proceeded under Section 36(5) of the Narcotics Control Act, 2018.

The provision allows imprisonment of up to one year and a fine for anyone who, after consuming alcohol or while under the influence of an intoxicating substance, disturbs public peace or engages in annoying behaviour, or drives a vehicle while intoxicated.

Rajib also questioned the circulation of photographs and videos of the detainees and the circumstances in which some were allegedly made to show their faces.

"Can the DB circulate such videos and photographs? Under what authority were they made to show their faces? My son is not a criminal. Why should he be publicly portrayed like this?" he said.

He further alleged that his son and the other detainees might have become victims of internal disputes within the police.

"We heard from several police sources that the additional DIG had internal issues that led to the raid," he claimed.

Supreme Court lawyer Sara Hossain questioned the legal basis for the punishments, saying attending a DJ party or dancing was not a criminal offence.

"What exactly is an 'illegal DJ party'? How did the party become illegal?" she told The Daily Star. "It's not a crime in itself to go to a party, let alone a DJ party."

If the detainees were punished under the Narcotics Control Act, she said, the authorities must establish the alleged offences through evidence.

"The offence is not dancing or being at a DJ party. If the allegation is that they consumed intoxicating substances and disturbed public peace, what evidence was produced?" she asked.

Criticising descriptions of the gathering as an "illegal DJ party" and the participants as being involved in "antisocial activities", she said music and dancing were part of the country's culture.

"How can enjoying music or dancing be treated as a crime? Are they committing an offence because they were listening to modern music? This is absurd," she said.

Sara also questioned why the detainees were filmed and their photographs and videos circulated, including footage recorded before their convictions.

"Why were they filmed at that stage, when nothing had been proved against them? What was the justification?" she asked.

She said the convictions did not resolve questions over the circulation of the images if the proceedings themselves were unlawful, and questioned whether publishing the images served any public interest.

"We certainly need operations against crime, but every operation must be carried out according to the law," she said.

Supreme Court lawyer Barrister Faran Mohammad Araf also questioned the manner of the raid, saying police appeared to have acted on information without obtaining a warrant.

He said one of the most relevant legal guidelines, interpreting article 32 of the constitution, concerned protecting detainees' dignity at the time of apprehension.

"Even when making an arrest, law enforcers must respect an individual's dignity and personal liberty. They cannot publicly expose or humiliate someone or turn them into an object of ridicule," he told The Daily Star.

He said existing laws and directives concerning the media favoured protecting the dignity, privacy, and rights of accused persons rather than subjecting them to public humiliation.