DHAKA SATURDAY NOVEMBER 7, 2026

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



"The Stock Market crashed today because the Dumocrats had a big Tuesday – So sad to see, you only have yourselves to blame!"
DONALD TRUMP




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# LPG now way too costly in Bangladesh

## Consumers pay up to 45% more than those in neighbouring countries

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Consumers in Bangladesh are paying around 30 to 45 percent more for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) than the official or published retail rates in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

The official retail price of LPG in Bangladesh has risen by nearly 52 percent since February, just before the outbreak of the Iran war, as the disruption of Middle Eastern supplies forced importers to turn to more distant sources, pushing up freight costs and premiums for securing cargoes.

The price increased from Tk 113 per kilogram in February to Tk 171.68 in November.

Over the same period, the converted official retail price rose by around 34 percent in Pakistan, 12 percent in Sri Lanka and 7 percent in India, while Nepal's latest available rate was about 6 percent higher than its February price.

At the November rate, LPG cost around Tk 132 per kg in Pakistan, Tk 130 in Sri Lanka and Tk 119 in Nepal, according to calculations based on the respective countries' published prices and exchange rates.

These comparisons, however, do not necessarily reflect actual market prices in Pakistan, as local newspapers report that the market price is nearly double the official rate.

In India, household consumers pay the equivalent of around Tk 87 per kg, but the rate is not directly comparable with Bangladesh's because the Indian government subsidises domestic LPG.

Commercial LPG in Delhi costs around Tk 194 per kg, which is higher than Bangladesh's regulated retail price.

Comparisons with India often overlook the difference between household and commercial LPG prices, said Jalal Ahmed, chairman of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC).

India's household consumers pay less because the government absorbs a substantial part of the cost, while commercial users pay a market-linked rate.

Pakistan's official notified price is far below what some consumers pay in the open market, and Nepal depends on supplies from India, he said.

The prices nevertheless show that Bangladesh's regulated retail rate has risen more sharply than those in several neighbouring markets.

Pakistan and Sri Lanka, unlike landlocked Nepal, have deep sea ports that allow them to receive larger LPG vessels, Jalal said.

He identified three structural disadvantages for Bangladesh: its relatively small purchasing volume, dependence on spot market purchases and the additional cost of transferring LPG from mother vessels to smaller vessels.

"Bangladesh is a much smaller buyer than India," he said.

Indian buyers can purchase around 1 lakh tonnes in a single vessel, while Bangladeshi companies typically buy much smaller quantities.

When both countries approach suppliers in the same international market, sellers naturally prioritise larger buyers, giving them stronger bargaining power.

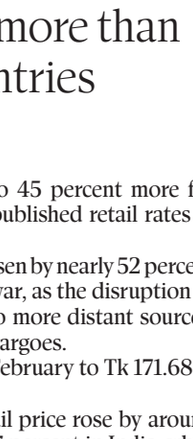
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**OFFICIAL LPG PRICE BY COUNTRY** (IN TAKA PER KG)

| COUNTRY | FEBRUARY | NOVEMBER | RISE (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bangladesh | 113 | 171.68 | 52 |
| Pakistan | 99 | 132 | 34 |
| Sri Lanka | 117 | 130 | 12 |
| Nepal | 112 | 119 | 6 |
| India | 81 | 87 | 7 |

*CALCULATIONS BASED ON RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES' PUBLISHED PRICES AND EXCHANGE RATES

*INDIA SUBSIDISES HOUSEHOLD LPG







## EVERY STEP A RISK

**Residents carefully navigate a broken bamboo footbridge over the Baromasia river in Kurigram's Phulbari upazila, risking serious injury at every step as the dilapidated structure remains the only link between eight villages and their unions and upazila headquarters. *Inset*, as the bridge has become largely unusable, women wade through the river carrying belongings on their heads. The photos were taken recently at Kishamat Shimulbari in Naodanga union.** PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

# 90m displaced people at risk from climate threats: UN

## Three-quarters of them live in climate-vulnerable countries like Bangladesh

REUTERS, *Geneva*

Nearly 90 million forcibly displaced people are living in countries increasingly exposed to climate-related droughts, floods and extreme heat, the UN refugee agency said yesterday, warning ahead of the COP31 climate summit that more funding is needed to help vulnerable communities adapt.

**UNHCR called on governments and climate-finance institutions meeting at COP31 to increase funding for climate adaptation.**

Nearly three-quarters of the world's forcibly displaced people are living in countries such as Afghanistan and Bangladesh that are exposed to severe climate-related risks, according to the report by the agency, known as UNHCR, published ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference in Antalya, Turkey.

The findings show the overlap between conflict, displacement and climate change, the report said. "Climate adaptation in fragile and displacement-affected areas is a matter of survival," said Anton Leis Garcia, UNHCR's assistant

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**HISTORIC NOVEMBER 7**

## National Revolution and Solidarity Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country is set to observe National Revolution and Solidarity Day today commemorating the 51st anniversary of the historic events of November 7, 1975.

On the eve of the day, President Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman issued separate messages.

In a message, the president called upon all to stay united in commitment to safeguarding national independence and

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## How Zia rose to the centre of power

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR



Adjutant General Moinul Hossain Chowdhury woke up to shrill ring of the telephone that had shattered the silence of the night around 4:30am on November 3, 1975.

Half-awake, he picked up the receiver. An anxious woman's voice came from the other end. "Brother, what is going on here? Officers and soldiers are taking [her husband] from our bedroom."

Before he could ask for details, the call ended mid-sentence. Initially, Moinul wondered whether Raushan Ershad was calling. But her husband was away in India for training.

Then the telephone rang again.

"Brother, Zia has been taken from the bedroom and locked in the drawing room."

The voice was unmistakably urgent. It was Khaleda Zia, wife of the army chief, Ziaur Rahman.

"I will try to come to your house," Moinul replied before hanging up.

At Ziaur Rahman's residence, he saw a captain standing

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**Bangladesh fast bowler Hasan Mahmud appeals for a West Indies wicket on Day 2 of the second and final Test, in Sylhet, yesterday. Hasan picked up six wickets to help bowl the visitors out for 356 in their first innings, setting a national and a world record in the process. The hosts were 88 for three at stumps, trailing by 268 runs. Story on Page 11.** PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

MIDTERMS ROUT

## Trump retains grip on foreign policy

REUTERS, *Washington*

President Donald Trump emerged weakened at home after Republicans suffered sweeping midterm losses, but analysts say he is likely to retain broad authority over US foreign policy during the final two years of his presidency.

Democrats, who captured both chambers of Congress, have pledged greater oversight of Trump's agenda and efforts to curb what Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer called the president's "chaos at home and abroad." Their priorities include ending the Iran war, restoring support for Ukraine and reassessing US policy toward Israel.

However, foreign affairs remain one of the areas where presidents wield extensive constitutional powers. "A Democratic Congress has the ability to stop Trump's domestic legislative agenda, but it doesn't have much ability to stop a president from exercising his powers as commander-in-chief," said William Wechsler, senior director of

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# A different me in every corner of Dhaka

JANNATUL BUSHRA




AI-ASSISTED ILLUSTRATION

MY DHAKA

Dhaka is a city of many contradictions. The roads change character every few hundred metres, the pavements have their own interpretation of public space, and apparently, so do its residents.

I have noticed that I, too, seem to have several versions of myself scattered across the city, each with a rather questionable reputation. In Karwan Bazar, I will haggle over Tk 10 as though my entire financial future depends on it, and perhaps my father's good name is at stake too. The very same me, a few kilometres away in Dhanmondi, will leave Tk 50 as a tip and carry on with her day, blissfully unaware of the hypocrisy.

Well, it is possible that I have several personalities. It is also possible that Dhaka simply brings out different sides of me depending on where I happen to be.

Take Nilkhet and New Market, for instance. I refuse to separate the two because a trip to one inevitably turns into a trip to both. Together, they have seen me bargain with a determination that would put my Karwan Bazar self to shame.

I can spend an entire afternoon looking for a book, checking its price at three different stalls and arguing over Tk 20 as if there is no tomorrow. The book will probably sit unread on my shelf for the next two years, but at least I got it for less. Priorities, clearly.

If New Market tests my bargaining skills, Gulistan tests my survival instincts. It somehow brings out the Bear Grylls in me. There, I can squeeze through impossible crowds and dodge speeding vehicles, all in pursuit of a jhalmuri wala someone once told me about near Stadium Market. Finding him without losing my shoes, my belongings or my patience feels like a personal achievement.

Of course, not every neighbourhood brings out the scrappy shopper or the curious food hunter in me. Shahbagh, for instance, knows my politically opinionated side. It has seen me march, protest, and argue about politics, only for the same revolutionary to start wondering where lunch is coming from. Apparently, I am quite prepared to challenge the establishment, just not on an empty stomach.

And then there is Banani, where I exchange my activist instincts for the anxieties of a functioning adult. It knows the woman who can look reasonably professional at 10:00am, only to spend the journey home questioning her career choices, her life decisions, and whether she qualifies as a proper adult at all.

Fortunately, Baily Road offers a temporary escape from all this adulting. It brings out my more cultured side: the person who watches a play, discusses its deeper meaning afterwards, and briefly believes she has become a more intellectually evolved human being. This version of me is, however, easily distracted by the prospect of dinner.

And dinner is where Puran Dhaka comes in. All intellectual pretensions disappear at the mention of kachchi or a good kebab. I will happily put up with its traffic and heat for a plate of either, but ask me to make the same trip for something productive and suddenly, I have other commitments.

To be fair, Puran Dhaka also brings out the history geek in me, the one who romanticises its old streets, fading architecture and the Dhaka that once was. But that is strictly a daytime affair. After dark, I am less interested in architectural heritage and considerably more interested in where that kebab smell is coming from.

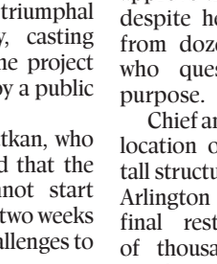
Perhaps that is the thing about Dhaka. Here, we change the streets, and the streets change us. And every neighbourhood, in turn, comes to know a different version of us!

# Final salute to a soldier

## Titas, 28, who was killed in a gun attack by trafficking gang in Teknaf laid to rest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Faridpur*

Bangladesh Army soldier Md Titas Sheikh, 28, who was killed during a joint operation against a human trafficking gang in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf upazila, was laid to rest at his village home in Nagarkanda upazila of Faridpur yesterday evening amid tears and grief.



He was buried beside his grandmother's grave at Laskardia West Para graveyard around 6:30pm following his namaz-e-janaza at Laskardia Atikur Rahman High School field.

Earlier, his body arrived at Mahendra Narayan Academy field in Nagarkanda by an army helicopter from Ramu at 4:41pm.

A team led by Major Sohel Ahmed, commanding officer of the 15 RE Riverine Engineer Battalion under Padma Cantonment, received the body.

Around 5:00pm, it was taken to the school field in Laskardia Union for the funeral prayer, attended by family members, relatives and local people.

Among those who spoke were his maternal uncle and Laskardia Union Parishad Chairman Babul Talukder and Nagarkanda Upazila Assistant Commissioner (Land) Khairul Hasan.

Following the burial, the Bangladesh Army paid its final respects with a guard of honour and placed a wreath on his grave. Seven soldiers then fired 21 rounds in three volleys.

Titas joined the Bangladesh Army in 2017 and was serving with the army's 1 Bir unit at Rangikhali Army Camp in Teknaf.

The eldest of two brothers and a sister, he married Sumaiya Akter, 22, four years ago and had planned to take her to his workplace in December.

His father, Afzal Sheikh, is a retired army member, while his younger brother Akram Hossain also serves in the army.

His mother, Rekha Begum, said she last spoke to Titas on Wednesday night.

"I will go on an operation on Thursday afternoon. Pray for me, mother," she recalled him saying.

Sepoy Titas Sheikh, 27, sustained a gunshot wound to his left shoulder after traffickers opened fire on a joint force in the Rangikhali hills around 5:00pm on Thursday, according to an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) press release.

He was initially treated at Leda IRC Rohingya Hospital before being transferred to Ramu Combined Military Hospital, where he was declared dead at 8:48pm.

# US judge blocks Trump's massive arch project

AFP, *Washington*

A US federal judge blocked President Donald Trump's massive triumphal arch project on Thursday, casting doubt over the future of the project hours after it was green-lit by a public commission.

District Judge Tanya Chutkan, who is overseeing the case, ruled that the Trump administration cannot start construction on the arch for two weeks while the court considers challenges to its legality.

The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) had voted 8-4 to approve the project earlier Thursday, despite hearing hours of testimony from dozens of furious opponents who questioned its legality and purpose.

Chief among the complaints was the location of the 250-foot (76-meter) tall structure: adjacent to the hallowed Arlington National Cemetery, the final resting place for hundreds of thousands of American service members.

# LPG now way too costly in Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

India also has three state-owned oil marketing companies with long-term supply arrangements. In Bangladesh, only a few companies maintain such contracts, while many depend on spot purchases.

Spot purchases expose importers to price volatility and make it harder to secure cargoes at competitive rates, particularly when global supply is tight.

Long-term contracts provide greater certainty over volumes and supply schedules, although they do not necessarily protect buyers from changes in international prices.

Besides, Bangladesh often has to transfer LPG from large mother vessels to smaller vessels before bringing it ashore, involving an additional stage of handling and freight.

The disruption of Middle Eastern supplies has made these disadvantages more pronounced.

Before the war began on February 28, Bangladesh sourced much of its LPG from the Gulf.

But the conflict and the resultant restrictions on shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and the US–Bangladesh Agreement on Reciprocal Trade have compelled importers to seek alternative supplies from the US.

BERC's country-of-origin data show that the US share of Bangladesh's LPG imports rose from 27.4 percent in September 2025 to 85 percent in September this year.

The share recorded as coming from Oman fell from 41 percent to zero over the same period.

The shift towards US supplies has increased voyage times.

Shipments from the US Gulf take around 40 to 45 days to reach the Bay of Bengal, compared with roughly two weeks from Middle Eastern suppliers, according to industry sources.

Freight costs for US-origin cargoes had risen sharply, said Azam J Chowdhury, director of Omera Petroleum and former president of the LPG Operators Association of Bangladesh.

He cited an increase from around $82 per tonne before the conflict to as much as $250 per tonne under current conditions.

The pressure is not confined to Bangladesh.

US propane exports reached a record 2.2 million barrels a day in September, with Asian markets receiving 38 million barrels of US propane and 10.4 million barrels of butane during the month, according to S&P Global.

As buyers compete for supplies, international prices have risen.

S&P Global assessed North Asian propane cargoes at $977 per tonne and butane at $1,057 in October.

Butane commanded a higher price as demand for winter-grade gasoline blending increased in Western markets and disruptions to Middle Eastern supplies tightened availability, it said.

The higher butane price is particularly significant for Bangladesh, as BERC calculates local LPG prices using a blend of 35 percent propane and 65 percent butane.

On this basis, the North Asian prices translate into a weighted average of around $1,029 per tonne.

This compares with a weighted average of $759 per tonne under the Saudi Aramco Contract Price (CP), which BERC continues to use as its principal benchmark despite the shift in Bangladesh's import sources.

For November, Saudi Aramco set the CP at $720 per tonne for propane and $780 for butane. The North Asian weighted price was therefore around 36 percent higher.

The commission's formula provides a benchmark for retail prices, but it does not necessarily capture the actual procurement cost of every importer.

Prices paid by companies can vary according to source, contract terms, cargo size, freight, insurance and supplier premiums.

The country was still using the Saudi CP benchmark while companies were paying prices based on other international market rates, Azam said.

"It's becoming more dangerous nowadays," he said.

Domestic charges have also increased, which has also impacted local prices.

Under the BERC's November revision, storage and bottling charges rose by 40 percent to Tk 23.48 per kg from Tk 16.74.

Distributors' charges increased by 70 percent to Tk 7.08 from Tk 4.17, while retailers' charges rose by 55 percent to Tk 5.83 from Tk 3.75.

For a 12kg cylinder, the storage and bottling charge has increased to Tk 282 from Tk 201, while the distributor's charge rose to Tk 85 from Tk 50 and the retailer's charge to Tk 70 from Tk 45.

The increases came amid demands from traders for higher commissions and changes to the distribution system, announcing a two-day strike in selling LPG countrywide.

Market concentration adds another layer to the problem.

Bangladesh has around 33 licensed LPG operators, but only 16 companies imported 17.4 lakh tonnes of fuel in fiscal 2025-26, according to figures presented by the BERC technical committee. Seven companies accounted for 86 percent of imports.

The country's licensed companies have a combined annual bottling capacity of 6.38 million tonnes, while private storage capacity stands at around 1,41,635 tonnes.

Imports in fiscal 2025-26 represented only around 27 percent of annual bottling capacity, indicating that much of the licensed capacity remains unused.

The government has also struggled to establish a direct presence in the market.

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) initiated a plan to import LPG by itself to reduce dependence on private operators and provide an alternative source during shortages.

After failing to secure an acceptable offer through its tender process, BPC is now exploring alternative arrangements, Jalal said.

The state-owned BPC is now in discussions with private companies about using their storage facilities and finding a marketing partner.

"However, no arrangement had been finalised," he added.

# 90m displaced

FROM PAGE 1

high commissioner for operations.

"We need climate financing to reach the communities where the needs are greatest," he said.

The report highlighted the experience of a Sudanese refugee who fled conflict in al-Fashir in June 2023 to the Farchana refugee settlement in eastern Chad. The refugee said she sometimes goes a week without finding safe water and must walk increasingly long distances for alternative sources as nearby seasonal riverbeds dry up amid intensifying heat.

It also warned that climate change is making it harder for displaced people to return home sustainably.

In the first half of 2026, more than two-thirds of refugee returns were to countries highly exposed to climate hazards, placing them at risk of renewed displacement.

In Syria, where nearly 4 million displaced people have recently returned, people face worsening water scarcity and erratic rainfall, while flooding along the Euphrates River in May damaged homes and displaced thousands of people.

Across sub-Saharan Africa, one in three refugee settlements could experience at least 100 days of dangerous heat each year by 2050, threatening health and livelihoods, the report said. In some settlements in Ethiopia, including Helaweyn, dangerous heat could persist for more than 200 days a year, increasing the risks of heatstroke and premature death.

"Refugees often have limited access to cooling, water and reliable energy, making it harder to escape dangerous temperatures," it said.

UNHCR also warned that a forecast supersized El Niño could worsen climate-related risks in many refugee-hosting countries and trigger further displacement.

In East Africa, severe flooding could displace up to three million people in Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda by the end of this year, UNHCR said. In the Sahel, drought, flooding and conflict could intensify competition over scarce resources, while parts of Asia face heightened risks of droughts, floods and cyclones.

UNHCR called on governments and climate-finance institutions meeting at COP31 to increase funding for climate adaptation, highlighting that only about 10 percent of climate finance reaches fragile or conflict-affected countries.

On Wednesday, a separate UN report found rich countries were falling well short of the $305 billion needed each year to help developing nations adapt to climate change, even as extreme weather events become more frequent and severe.

# National Revolution and Solidarity Day

FROM PAGE 1

sovereignty, rise above all political differences.

Fakhrul extended heartfelt greetings and felicitations to all citizens of Bangladesh and paid profound tribute to the valiant soldiers and patriotic people who participated in the epoch-making revolution of soldiers and people on November 7, 1975.

"With the overwhelming support of the people, he [Ziaur Rahman] was entrusted with the solemn responsibility of governing the state and steering the nation out of crisis. At this moment of profound crisis, he emerged as a saviour of the nation," said Fakhrul.

In a separate message, the PM said on November 7, 1975, the soldiers and people of Bangladesh united to thwart all conspiracies against the country's independence and sovereignty.

"I believe that the historic November 7, 1975 was a defining date in determining Bangladesh's course," he said.

He said, "Those who sought to turn Bangladesh into a subservient state, deprive its people of their democratic and political rights, establish one-party authoritarian rule, and undermine the glory of the armed forces were defeated by the historic revolution of patriotic soldiers and the people on that day."

Tarique Rahman said history bore witness to how the forces defeated on November 7, 1975, later united under the banner of the Grand Alliance and turned Bangladesh into a subservient state through a prolonged conspiracy.

"Finally, after more than a decade and a half, the country was freed from fascism through a bloody mass uprising led by brave students and people, at the cost of thousands of martyrs," he said.

"Our foremost commitment on this year's November 7 should be to ensure that no one can ever again deprive the country and its people of their rights or turn Bangladesh into a subservient state. National unity is essential to fulfil this commitment," he added.

The government has taken elaborate programmes to mark the day as it has been announced a public holiday, reports BSS. The national flag will be hoisted atop all government, semi-government, autonomous, private buildings and educational institutions across the country as well as missions abroad.

The programmes include discussions at district and upazila levels, children's drawing competitions, special broadcasting of the Nov-7, 1975 programmes on state-run television and radio channels as well as private broadcasters and cultural events to be organised by Shilpakala Academy.

The Armed Forces will also arrange programmes, including a colourful display at the Army Stadium in Dhaka.

Special prayers will be offered at mosques, temples, churches, pagodas and other places of worship.

Improved diets will be served at hospitals, prisons, orphanages, Shishu Sadans, juvenile correction centres, Shanti Nibash facilities.

All children's parks will remain open free of charge throughout the day under the management of city corporations and municipalities.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting will arrange the publication of special articles, literary supplements and special supplements in national dailies.

Documentary films will also be screened at cinema halls and through mobile vans. A colourful display will be staged at the Army Stadium in Dhaka.

The Dhaka Elevated Expressway will remain toll-free for all vehicles for six hours today.

The BNP-led government reinstated November 7 as a public holiday in the first week of October this year.

# Trader shot in broad daylight in Cox's Bazar

FROM PAGE 12

The attackers then fired three shots at him, he said, adding that he sustained bullet injuries to different parts of his body.

The victim said one of the attackers also tried to shoot him in the head at close range, but the firearm reportedly failed to discharge.

He identified four of the attackers as Zayed, Kitab Ali, Wazed Ali, and Abu Naser, all from the Link Road area.

Mahmudul's relatives alleged that locals caught Naser after the attack, but Rashed Ullah, president of Jhilongjha union BNP, freed him.

Mahmudul said the attackers were followers of the union BNP president and General Secretary Liaquat Ali.

Monir, a relative of the victim, also alleged that the attack was politically motivated and carried out at the instigation of Liaquat.

Asked about the allegations of BNP leaders' involvement, OC Mohammad Ali said police were investigating the incident.

BNP leader Rashed Ullah could not be reached for comment.

According to the daily Prothom Alo, a shooting took place on the Cox's Bazar Court premises on May 24. BNP leader Liaquat and his brother Zayed have been accused of leading the attack on their rivals. One person was hit by bullets. Liaquat was arrested in a case filed over the incident.

# Trump retains grip on foreign policy

FROM PAGE 1

Middle East programs at the Atlantic Council.

The most urgent challenge remains the conflict with Iran, a key issue in an election shaped by rising fuel prices and public fatigue with eight months of war. Trump acknowledged the conflict contributed to Republican losses but defended his decision to strike Iran, arguing it was necessary to prevent Tehran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Analysts say Trump now faces three broad options: escalating military action, pursuing negotiations or maintaining the current stalemate. Critics warn that renewed hostilities could deepen economic pressures and further divide Trump's political base, where opposition to foreign interventions has grown.

Signs of Republican unease have already emerged. Vice President JD Vance publicly questioned the cost of the Iran conflict and blamed it for the party's election defeat, distancing himself from Trump's approach.

Democrats also plan to revive support for Ukraine after Trump halted direct assistance and faced criticism for easing restrictions on Russian diesel exports. They hope to attract enough Republican backing for future aid packages, though any legislation could face a presidential veto.

Meanwhile, Congress is expected to take a tougher stance on Israel. Progressive Democrats elected on promises to reduce military aid and challenge US support for Israel are pushing for greater scrutiny of Israeli actions in Gaza and the West Bank. Some Republicans have also begun questioning Washington's traditional backing for its closest Middle East ally.




**A graffiti portrait of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore on the boundary wall of Khulna Railway Station has been defaced with black ink. The portrait was part of a series of murals commissioned by Khulna City Corporation ahead of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's visit to the city on Thursday. The artworks, depicting eminent personalities and the region's cultural heritage, line the road from Shibbari to the railway station. The defacement came to light yesterday.** PHOTO: STAR

IN FOCUS

# Fascist forces behind RMG unrest

## Salahuddin Ahmed says

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT,** *Ctg*

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday alleged that fascist forces were behind attempts to create unrest in the garment sector, urging those staging movements to engage in constructive criticism instead.

He said some were trying to pave the way for the return of fascist forces, but people remained united against the political activities of those responsible for mass killings.

Ruling out the possibility of the Awami League's return to politics, the minister said people would never again allow the party, which he described as oppressive, autocratic, fascist and murderous, to engage in politics.

"Those who shed people's blood to establish fascism, oppressed the people and committed genocide will have no place in the country's politics again," he said while addressing an event at Al-Jamiatul Islamiah Azizul Uloom Babunagar in Fatikchhari, Chattogram.

Salahuddin said it had taken 16-17 years to free the country from an autocratic regime, during which nearly 3,000 people were victims of enforced disappearance and around 7,000 were killed or subjected to torture and persecution.

Citing UN estimates, he said around 1,400 people were killed during the July-August uprising. Yet, those responsible for mass killings and repression had not expressed regret or remorse, he added.

# He went for a job, ended up in a scam compound

## 3,364 Bangladeshis deported from Cambodia since 2023; 852 linked to online scams

**MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN**

Around 2:30am one night, a brief power outage gave Tofail Ahmed a chance to escape a Chinese-run online scam compound in Cambodia, where he had been held for one month and 27 days.

"I climbed over an 11-foot wall, got injured, but kept running for about 3.5 kilometres barefoot before sheltering under a tree," he recalled.

Tofail had paid Tk 7.70 lakh to recruiters in Bangladesh for a promised data entry job. Instead, they sold him to the compound for around $2,000, he alleged.

His ordeal reflects a wider problem. According to Cambodia's Ministry of Interior, 3,364 Bangladeshis were deported between September 1, 2023, and September 13 this year, including 852 identified as linked to online scams.

However, the ministry did not specify how many of them were trafficking victims forced into criminal activity.

Tofail travelled to Cambodia on April 30 this year after obtaining a Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) smart card. Although promised a data entry job, his recruitment invitation letter mentioned construction work.

Upon arrival, he was taken at night to a compound around 300km away, where he discovered an online scam operation.

"I told the people who sent me that I would not work in a scam centre. But they said I had no choice and must continue working," he said.

He was allegedly told to pay $2,000 for his release and forced to work from 10:00pm to 10:00am.

"They tortured us physically and mentally. We were given electric shocks and denied food when we failed to meet their targets," he said.

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# A slip of the tongue cracks 5-year-old murder mystery

## Victim's son's account of an altercation helps CID identify alleged killers

**SHARIFUL ISLAM**

A slip of the tongue during a cannabis-smoking session has finally cracked a nearly five-year-old murder mystery in Magura, exposing an alleged hit squad hired by none other than the victim's elder brother.

The breakthrough came after one of the alleged killers got into a heated argument with Ashon Lal, son of victim Manik Lal Dom, at the district's Sweeper Colony.

Losing his temper during an altercation, Mehedi Hasan Akash, 30, a local fish market worker, blurted out a chilling threat -- "I will do to you exactly what I did to your father."

Akash made the threat while the two were consuming cannabis, providing a crucial lead for the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and helping unravel a case that had baffled local police and the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) for years.

The investigation revealed that Manik Lal, 35, a morgue assistant, was allegedly killed by four men hired by his elder brother, Hira Lal Dom, 50, following a bitter family feud.

On the night of June 29, 2021, Manik went to sleep beside his younger son, Sun Babu, then nine, at their home in Magura's Sweeper Colony.

Around 4:00am the next day, the boy woke up to a horrifying sight. His father was lying on the floor in a pool of blood, with his throat slit.

Manik's wife, Asha Rani, filed a murder case with Magura Sadar Police Station the following day.

Local police initially investigated the case before transferring it to the PBI on January 12, 2022. However, after nearly three and a half years, the PBI failed to identify the killers.

In May 2025, the PBI submitted a final report to the district court, effectively closing the investigation without naming any suspects.

The court rejected the report and, in October that year, directed the CID's Magura unit to reinvestigate the murder. Sub-Inspector Anisur Rahman was assigned to lead the investigation.

After taking charge, SI Anisur questioned Ashon, 21, about his father's murder. During the conversation, Ashon recalled the threat Akash had made during their altercation at the colony.

SI Anisur decided to pursue the lead. Akash was detained in Magura's Old Fish Market area on April 26 this year.

"Akash's remark raised my

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



**Losing his temper during an altercation, Mehedi Hasan Akash, 30, a local fish market worker, blurted out a chilling threat -- "I will do to you exactly what I did to your father."**



# Prices ease at kitchen markets, yet sales remain low

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Prices of vegetables, eggs, broiler chicken, potatoes and onions have edged down in the capital's kitchen markets, yet traders say the seasonal decline has failed to boost sales as shrinking purchasing power forces low- and fixed-income households to cut spending.

While winter supplies usually draw larger crowds as prices ease, visits to kitchen markets in Mirpur-1, Mirpur-7, Mirpur-11, Ibrahimpur, Shewrapara, Kazipara and Karwan Bazar on Thursday and yesterday painted a different picture.

Buyers said slight price drops for a few items offer little relief, while overall living costs remain high.

Most vegetable prices fell over the past week, with pointed gourd, yardlong beans, ridge gourd, sponge gourd, brinjal, snake gourd and country beans selling at Tk 40–60 per kg. Green, local and imported Indian tomatoes are retailed at Tk 60–140 per kg, depending on quality.

Potato and onion prices dropped by Tk 2–5 per kg from last week, selling at Tk 20–30 and Tk 40–50, respectively. However, imported garlic and ginger prices rose by Tk 10 per kg, reaching Tk 180–200 for garlic and Tk 150–160 for Chinese ginger.

Karwan Bazar vegetable vendor Mosharraf Hossain said prices had been falling for two weeks, but sales were not picking up as they usually did in previous years.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

# 'We just want one last glimpse of him'

## Family seeks govt assistance to bring Anisur's body home from Taiwan

**SHAHRIAR HOSSAIN**

Jummie Rahman and her younger brother Zarif are waiting for their father's body to return home. Their father, Md Anisur Rahman, 52, died in Taiwan on October 31, but his body remains at a hospital there as the family struggles to arrange its repatriation.

The family from Ratil village in Kashiani upazila of Gopalganj has one desperate wish: to see Anisur's face one last time. But they cannot afford the cost of bringing his body home.

Anisur went to Taiwan on a tourist visa on June 22 this year, hoping to repay his debts and support his family. Although his visa expired, he stayed on in search of work.



MD ANISUR RAHMAN

He fell ill on October 31 and was admitted to a hospital, where he died around 12:15pm while undergoing treatment.

Back home, his wife Shila Akter and their two children are now facing an uncertain future.

"After hearing the news of my father's death, we returned home. I am a second-year student at Mirpur Girls' Ideal College, while my younger brother studies in class six at Monipur High School and College. I do not know how we will continue our studies or what lies ahead," Jummie told The Daily Star.

Shila said she first learnt about her husband's illness on October 28. On the morning of October 31, his roommate informed her that Anisur had been admitted to hospital and placed in the ICU. About an hour later, she learnt of his death.

Anisur had suffered heavy business losses since the Covid-19 pandemic and went to Taiwan to support his children's education and meet family expenses, she said.

On November 2, Shila sought assistance from the foreign affairs and expatriates' welfare ministries and the Wage Earners' Welfare Board to bring her husband's body home.

Anisur's elder brother Azizur Rahman said he had been involved in a contracting business

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2




**Students of Government College of Applied Human Science, formerly Home Economics College, continue their protest for a second consecutive day yesterday in the capital's Nilkhet, demanding Principal Prof Meherun Nessa's resignation and justice over an alleged police attack, among other demands. The protest began after Meherun Nessa cancelled two students' residential hall seats over an event that overran its allotted time. When they sought reinstatement, she demanded Tk 12,600 to cover one night's air-conditioning and electricity costs.** PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

# How expats lit up an entire village in Tangail

## Migrants spend Tk 10 lakh to install 100 streetlights along 3km road



PHOTO: STAR

**In a collective effort, expatriates hailing from Sonalia village under Tangail's Basail upazila installed 100 street lights along a 3-kilometre road in the village so that people could use the road conveniently at night.**

**MIRZA SHAKIL,** *Tangail*

A three-kilometre stretch from Karatia Bazar to Sonalia graveyard in Sonalia village under Tangail's Basail upazila now stays lit up from dusk till dawn, thanks to 100 streetlights funded by expatriates from the village.

The initiative, named "Alokito Sonalia" (Illuminated Sonalia), was completed in just five months at a cost of Tk 10 lakh.

Before the lights were installed, villagers struggled to use the road at night. Students faced problems attending evening coaching classes, women felt unsafe, and thefts were common. The new lights have made night-time movement easier for villagers.

"We spent Tk 7,000-8,000 for each light, installed every 100 feet. Everyone contributed what they could -- we did it with our own money," said Amir Ali of the village, who works as a factory worker in Woodlands Industrial Park, Singapore.

Amir is among more than 100 young men from the village working in Singapore. Many others live in Europe and the United States. Together, they formed a committee to implement the project.

The expatriates' contribution to the village goes beyond street lighting. Over the past two years, they have built a road to the graveyard, planted flower gardens, constructed houses for the poor and distributed Eid gifts to 200 households.

Their next plan is to provide interest-free loans to meritorious students to help them sit for IELTS and pursue higher education abroad.

Rabiul Awal Uzzal, president of local youth organisation Honours Foundation, said the expatriates had transformed the village through their collective effort. "People from other villages now say -- look at Sonalia. If this continues, Sonalia will be a model village."

Abdul Mannan Miah, a primary school teacher, said the initiative reflected the expatriates' attachment to their roots.

"Despite living thousands of miles away, they have shown what love for the village means," he said.

Fazlul Haque, a member of Ward-1 of Habla Union Parishad, said incidents of theft along the road had largely stopped since the lights were installed.

Tariqul Islam Ratan, president of the Alokito Sonalia project, and Nurul Islam Robin, director of the Tangail Chamber of Commerce, also pledged their support for the expatriates' efforts to turn Sonalia into a model village.

# Protecting forest, struggling to survive

## Lawachara patrollers unpaid for five months

**MINTU DESHWARA**

"I have been risking my life to protect the forests and wildlife of Lawachara, yet I have not received my wages for five months. My family and I are struggling to make ends meet," said Arun Nayek, a member of the Community Patrolling Group (CPG).

Like him, 39 other CPG members protecting Lawachara National Park and three forest beats under the Sreemangal Wildlife Range in Moulvibazar have been without their allowances for five months, leaving many struggling to support their families.

According to CPG sources, the 40 members, including 30 men and 10 women, patrol the Lawachara, Kalachara and Chautali forest beats to protect wildlife and biodiversity.

Each is entitled to a daily allowance of Tk 300.

The workers, recruited by the Lawachara Co-Management Committee (CMC), alleged that payments stopped after Divisional Forest Officer Md Abul Kalam questioned the committee's legitimacy and withheld funds.

"We are poor. We have to borrow money to run our families. We do not know how we will manage in the coming days," said CPG member Babul Mia.

Members Sunil and Arun Kahar said they received neither their regular allowances nor festival allowances during Durga Puja.

Begum Bibi, Raina Begum and Parveen Begum said they had not received their allowances since June.

"We have continued patrolling the forest despite not receiving our allowances for nearly five months. Our families are suffering, but we cannot simply abandon our responsibilities," said CPG member Shanur Mia.

Shamsul Haque, general secretary of the Lawachara People's Forum, said withholding payments undermined conservation efforts and called for immediate settlement of the dues.

Sheikh Nazmul Haque, range officer of Sreemangal, attributed the delay partly to the withdrawal of support from an NGO that previously assisted the Forest Department in overseeing and forming CMC bodies.

"A private organisation used to provide a team of six to seven members to help us with various issues concerning the CMC committees and their formation. Their



support was very helpful, but they are no longer involved, so we now have to handle the entire process ourselves," he said.

He said manpower shortages had also delayed the formation of committees at three administrative levels.

"Although there may be some delay, the workers will receive their full dues. We are trying to settle the payments as quickly as possible," he said.

Repeated attempts to contact DFO Md Abul Kalam by phone and text message went unanswered.

**PRAYER TIMING**

NOVEMBER 07

| | Fazr | Zohr | Asr | Maghrib | Esha |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AZAN | 5-00 | 12-45 | 3-45 | 5-25 | 7-00 |
| JAMAAT | 5-35 | 1-15 | 4-00 | 5-30 | 7-30 |

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**Flat for Sale**

1,750 Square feet. 3 Bedroom Flat with 1 parking space is available for urgent sale at Dhanmondi Road 32.

01812187784, 01733623784

# We just want one last glimpse of him

FROM PAGE 3

in Dhaka but fell into debt after suffering losses. He borrowed Tk 7.5 lakh to go to Taiwan, he added.

The family said they had no means of repatriating the body without government assistance.

"We want to see our brother one last time. Without government assistance, we may not even get the chance to see his face for the last time," they said.

Kashiani Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Shahin Mia said Anisur's brother contacted him on November 3 and sent relevant documents.

He said he was discussing the matter with district-level authorities to explore possible assistance. The matter falls under the jurisdiction of the foreign affairs and expatriates' welfare ministries, he said, adding that it was too early to confirm whether the body could be brought home.

# He went for a job, ended up in a scam compound

FROM PAGE 3

Tofail retrieved his passport by telling his supervisor he needed it to open a bank account. Soon afterwards, the power outage enabled his escape.

He later obtained $20 from his family and moved elsewhere, fearing he would be killed if caught. The recruiters had never provided the promised one-year visa and work permit, leaving him without legal immigration status.

After learning on Facebook that the Bangladesh embassy in Thailand had arranged a waiver of overstay fines, he obtained the waiver and returned home on June 14. BRAC's Migration Programme has since been assisting him.

According to BMET data cited by BRAC, 15,963 Bangladeshis received employment clearances for Cambodia between January 1 last year and September 30 this year.

BRAC said recruiters lured Bangladeshis with computer operator, data entry and customer service jobs, promising monthly salaries ranging from Tk 50,000 to more than Tk 1 lakh.

Many paid Tk 2-7 lakh, only to be confined to guarded compounds, have their passports and phones confiscated, and be forced into online scams.

Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC's Migration Programme and Youth Platform, described the exploitation as "cyber slavery".

BRAC said 583 Bangladeshis had been repatriated from Cambodia by June, including 109 rescued from scam compounds.

The Bangladesh mission in Thailand also received requests for help from 1,796 Bangladeshis seeking repatriation. According to BRAC, around 300-400 had returned, leaving an estimated 1,300-1,400 awaiting repatriation at that time.

On October 20, another 30 Bangladeshis returned home following intervention by the mission after being detained in Cambodia while trying to leave.

"I want journalists to speak out so that people like me, particularly those from villages, do not fall into the hands of brokers who promise one job and force them into something completely different," Tofail said.

# Prices ease at kitchen markets

FROM PAGE 3

Wholesaler Lakin Mia at the same market said abundant supplies and a lack of buyers were leaving produce to rot, forcing wholesalers to sell at lower prices and incur losses.

Over the week, broiler chicken prices fell by Tk 10–15 per kg from last week to Tk 165–180. Farm brown egg prices dropped by Tk 10 to Tk 120–140 a dozen. Sonali chicken prices remained unchanged at Tk 260–320 per kg.

Following the 22-day fishing ban, increased supply pushed hilsa prices down by Tk 200–300 per kg, said Karwan Bazar vendor Shukkur Ali. Hilsa is now selling at Tk 2,000–2,200 per kg.

Prices of other fish varieties and meat remained unchanged, with beef selling at Tk 780–850 per kg, mutton at Tk 1,250–1,300 and goat meat at Tk 1,100–1,150.

Private car driver Abu Hanif, who earns Tk 28,000 a month, including overtime, said he was struggling to support himself and his wife in Dhaka and was considering sending her back to their village.

"Even if a few vegetables are cheaper, living costs haven't dropped. House rent is set to rise, while power bills and transport costs have gone up. We can barely make ends meet, so we cannot buy extra vegetables even at lower prices," he said at Karwan Bazar yesterday.

Banglamotor grocer Mojibur Rahman said lower consumer spending had also hurt small neighbourhood shops.

"Vegetable and egg prices dropped, but fish and meat remain expensive. As people cut back on shopping, my shop's sales and income fell, leaving me unable to buy enough groceries for my own family," he said.

**MPF**

**UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA**
**MASTER OF PROFESSIONAL FINANCE (MPF)**
**DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE**

**Admission Notice**

**For Application**: mpf.finanancedu.ac.bd/admission

**Application last date:** November 17, 2026, **Admission test date:** November 20, 2026 (Friday) at 10:00 AM (Written) and 11:15 AM (Viva-voce).

**For more information:** MPF Program Office (Room 4005), 3rd Floor MBA Building, Faculty of Business Studies, University of Dhaka
Email: mpf@du.ac.bd, Cell: +8801725288250 and +8801914379230.

ACCREDITED PROGRAMME ACCA · TOP 300 · CFA Institute

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Faridpur.
☎/Fax: 0631-63256/66367
E-mail: eerhdfaridpur@gmail.com

**e-Tender Notice**

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd).
e-Tenders are invited in e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) by Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Faridpur for the procurement of:

| Sl. No | Tender ID No/ Package No | Name of works | Last date and time for Tender Security submission | Tender Closing/ Opening Date & Time. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | 1366533, 43/e-GP/FRD/ 2026-2027 | Construction of R.C.C U-Drain at from Ch. 31+200m to Ch. 31+350 32th km (p) of Bhanga-Faridpur (Goalchamot) Road (N-804) under Road Division Faridpur, during the year 2026-2027 | 17/11/2026 12:00 hour | 17/11/2026 12:30 hour |
| 2 | 1366534, 44/e-GP/FRD/ 2026-2027 | Construction of R.C.C U-Drain at from Ch: 31+545 m to 31+730 m 32 th km (p) of Bhanga-Faridpur (Goalchamot) Road (N-804) under Road Division, Faridpur during the year 2026-2027 | 17/11/2026 12:00 hour | 17/11/2026 12:30 hour |

e-Tender details can be downloaded from 05/11/2026 time: 23:00 to 16/11/2026, time: 17:00 of e-GP system portal http://www.eprocure.gov.bd for pursue.
e-Tenders will be accepted only as stated in above list, accepted tenders will be opened online immediately as stated in above list.

(Khalid Saifullah Sardar)
ID No. 602287
Executive Engineer, (C.C) RHD
Road Division, Faridpur.

GD-2696

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**
প্রশাসনিক ট্রাইব্যুনাল-১, এর কার্যালয়
১৪, আব্দুল গণি রোড, ঢাকা-১০০০।

স্মারক নং-- /২০২৬ তারিখঃ ২০ কার্তিক ১৪৩৩ বঙ্গাব্দ / ০৫ নভেম্বর ২০২৬ খ্রিঃ

**কার নিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

এতদ্বারা প্রশাসনিক ট্রাইব্যুনাল-১ ঢাকা এর মেট্রো -খ-১৩-১৫৬৯ (MITSUBUSHI LANCHER GLX, মডেল নং-১১, সিসি-১৩০০, রেজিঃ সাল ২০১১ (যে অবস্থায় আছে সেই অবস্থায়) নিলামে বিক্রয়ের জন্য নিম্নলিখিত শর্তাবলী সাপেক্ষে আগ্রহী ব্যক্তিদের নিকট হতে নির্ধারিত দরপত্র তফশীল স্বাক্ষর ও সীল-মোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাইতেছে।

**শর্তাবলী**

০১। দরপত্র আগামী ইং ১১-১১-২০২৬ খ্রিঃ তারিখ বেলা ১৪.০০ ঘটিকার পর্যন্ত সময়ের মধ্যে অত্র কার্যালয়ে রক্ষিত দরপত্র বাক্সে জমা দিতে হবে। জমাকৃত দরপত্র ঐদিনই বেলা ১৫.০০ ঘটিকার সময়ে দরপত্র সমূহ দরদাতাদের সম্মুখে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) খোলা হবে।
০২। দরপত্রের উদ্ধৃত দরের ১০% আর্নেস্ট মানি হিসেবে রেজিস্ট্রার, প্রশাসনিক ট্রাইব্যুনাল-১, ১৪, আব্দুল গণি রোড, ঢাকা ১০০০ বরাবর ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/ পে-অর্ডার আকারে দরপত্রের সাথে জমা দিতে হবে। কৃতকার্য দরপত্র দাতাকে অবশিষ্ট ৯০% মূল্য এবং উদ্ধৃত মূল্যের নির্দিষ্ট হারে সরকারী নিয়ম মোতাবেক (উৎসে কর ও ভ্যাট কর্তন করে) দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত সিদ্ধান্তের ০২(দুই) কার্য দিবসের মধ্যে পরিশোধ অন্তে কারটি গ্রহন করা যাবে।
০৩। কারটি অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে নিম্ন স্বাক্ষরকারীর সাথে যোগাযোগক্রমে পরিদর্শন করা যাবে।
উল্লেখ্য, সংশ্লিষ্ট কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন সময় নিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তি স্থগিত বা বাতিল সংক্রান্ত যেকোন সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন। বিস্তারিত তথ্য ও সিডিউল অত্র কার্যালয়ের নোটিশ বোর্ডে পাওয়া যাবে।

(জিনাত জাহান)
সভাপতি
অকেজো গাড়ী নিলাম কমিটি
ও
রেজিস্ট্রার (যুগ্ম জেলা জজ)
প্রশাসনিক ট্রাইব্যুনাল-১, ঢাকা।

GD-2697

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**
**Office of the Project Director**
Maintenance & Rehabilitation of Railway Track in Eastern Zone of Bangladesh Railway Project
Bangladesh Railway, CRB, Chattogram.
Mobile No. 01711-506101
E-mail: pd.trep@railway.gov.bd

Reference No. 54.01.1500.109.07.079.26-1211 Dated: 05.11.2026

**e-Tender Notice**

The following e-Tenders have been invited in the National e-GP Portal System (http://eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of below **works:**

| Sl. No. | Tender Reference No. | Tender ID No. | Procurement Nature and Name | Tender Method | Tender Document Last selling (Date and Time) | Tender Closing (Date and Time) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | e-tender/ trep/ 2026-27/WD-1 | 1344181 | **Works:** Maintenance & Rehabilitation of Railway Track in Sholoshahar (SLHR)-Foteabad (FTWD)-Nazirhat (NZA) and Foteabad (FTWD) -Chattogram University (CTGU) Sections under Assistant Executive Engineer/Chattogram (AEN-1/ CTG) jurisdiction of Bangladesh Railway Eastern Zone. | **OTM NCT** (One Stage Two Envelope) | 07-December-2026 at 16:00 Hrs. | 08-December -2026 at 13:00 Hrs. |
| 2. | e-Tender/ trep/ 2026-2027/ WD-2 | 1344196 | **Works:** Maintenance & Rehabilitation of Railway Track in Laksam (LKM) - Noakhali (NKA) Sections under Assistant Executive Engineer/ Cumilla (AEN/CML) jurisdiction of Bangladesh Railway Eastern Zone. | **OTM NCT** (One Stage Two Envelope) | 07-December-2026 at 16:00 Hrs. | 08-December -2026 at 13:00 Hrs. |

**N.B.:**
1. Tenderers, registered in the e-GP System who meet the eligibility criteria are requested to participate through e-GP system.
2. Tenderers are requested to purchase the tender documents and submit the tender security from a schedule Bank through e-GP System.

এস (২৬) (৯৮)

05/11/2026
(Md. Tanvirul Islam)
Project Director

GD-2694

BID TO OUST NETANYAHU

# Israel opposition eases on ultra-Orthodox draft

**AFP,** *Jerusalem*

Israel's opposition yesterday saw a new path to oust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as one of its leaders backtracked on demands that ultra-Orthodox Jews serve in the military, opening the door to a once improbable alliance with the community.

Neither Netanyahu nor opposition chief Gadi Eisenkot reached a majority in the October 27 election, with Israeli society highly polarised over Netanyahu and worn down by three years of war. Eisenkot, a former military commander whose campaign sought to appeal to secular and liberal Israelis, could form a government with Israeli-Arabs, whose seat count soared on anger over Netanyahu's far-right government.

But an alliance with Israeli-Arabs faces strong disagreement from opposition partner Avigdor Liberman, a onetime aide to Netanyahu who now sharply criticises the prime minister but shares his hawkish views on the Palestinians.

Liberman said yesterday he would not back down on refusing to work with Israeli-Arabs but called for talks with ultra-Orthodox Jews, even though he has berated the community for years and ran on promises to end its exemption from Israel's mandatory military service.

Meanwhile, Israel's President said on Thursday evening that it was still unclear who could break the election deadlock as he pledged to nominate a candidate tomorrow. Listing the most important goals as removing Netanyahu and avoiding new elections, Liberman said it was time to compromise and "understand that trying to have everything risks getting nothing".




**Protesters shield themselves from water sprayed by riot police during a protest organised by students against the policies of Chilean President Jose Antonio Kast's government, in Santiago, Chile, on Thursday.** PHOTO: REUTERS

# US issues new Cuba sanctions

## Beijing opposes Washington's 'sabotage' of Cuba-China ties

**AGENCIES**

The United States on Thursday issued a determination paving the way for sanctions on the electronics, manufacturing, marine and technology sectors of the Cuban economy.

The determination was issued as the US imposed fresh Cuba-related sanctions on people and entities, targeting a crude oil shipping network, state-owned entities and China-based suppliers of Cuba's military forces, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement.

"The Trump Administration will not stand by while the Cuban regime funnels the island's resources to its military elite, while regime insiders and their family members profit from opaque offshore networks, and while Cuba continues to serve as a staging ground for a global coalition of hostile anti-American actors to threaten, spy on, and plot against the United States and its interests," Rubio said.

Meanwhile, Beijing yesterday condemned the new US sanctions against Cuba which it said sought to "sabotage" Chinese relations with the island.

The new wave of sanctions includes, for the first time, two Chinese companies accused of supplying the island's military with electronics and other security equipment.

China's foreign ministry vehemently opposed the move, calling the sanctions illegal and an example of "long-arm jurisdiction".

**China's foreign ministry called the sanctions illegal and an example of "long-arm jurisdiction"**

# Midterms fuel AI fears

## Global tech stocks plunge as US Democrat win raises prospect of AI crackdown

**AFP,** *Hong Kong*

Tech firms suffered a bloodbath yesterday as investors tracked a collapse on Wall Street fuelled by fears that Democrats will ramp up regulation of the AI industry following their blowout victory in this week's US midterm elections.

Trading boards were a sea of red in early business, with Seoul and Tokyo taking the brunt of the selling as traders fled to the hills amid uncertainty about a sector that had pushed stock markets to record highs just five months ago.

While the historic "blue wave" in Tuesday's vote had been initially welcomed on hopes it could put pressure on President Donald Trump to wind down his war against Iran, fears about the impact on the AI buildout soon came to the fore.

Data centres have faced broad opposition from US voters across the political spectrum, and many midterm winners have pledged to put the brakes on such projects. Analysts said investors were also spooked by a call



from progressive US Senator Bernie Sanders for a national moratorium on their building.

The results compounded already heightened fears about the hundreds of billions firms had pumped into the sector and when they would see a return, while the recent spike in borrowing costs also fuelled concerns about their financial position.

The eye-watering rally in many companies' valuations had also caused unease on trading floors. Michael Hewson at MCH Market Insights said investors were selling up because of "concerns that we might see greater opposition to AI buildout plans, with the results in Texas prompting concerns that politicians in the state might target Elon Musk's Tesla and SpaceX due to his support for Trump".

New York's Nasdaq plunged 5.5 percent in its worst day -- percentage-wise -- since April last year when Trump unveiled his wide-ranging global tariffs. The S&P 500 tanked more than four percent and the Dow more than three percent.

Bloomberg said the Philadelphia Semiconductor Index had collapsed around 16 percent this week, putting it on course for its worst run since April last year. Trump blamed the collapse on the Democrats, writing on Truth Social: "The Stock Market crashed today because the Dumocrats had a big Tuesday – So sad to see, you only have yourselves to blame! President DONALD J. TRUMP."

Seoul briefly plunged almost nine percent before ending six percent lower with chip giant SK hynix off more than 10 percent while rival Samsung was 6.4 percent down.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

# 'Big, beautiful' deal in the works: Trump

**AGENCIES**

US President Donald Trump said he met privately on Thursday with Russian President Vladimir Putin's envoy after the Russian official appeared with representatives from Ukraine at a White House event organised by US first lady Melania Trump.

Trump would not disclose what he discussed with Putin envoy Kirill Dmitriev but predicted a deal could emerge soon aimed at resolving the Russian war in Ukraine.

A US delegation is scheduled to mediate talks in Abu Dhabi November 10 to 11 between representatives from Russia and Ukraine. Trump, speaking to reporters at the White House, said the war was close to being settled and that ending it might involve all of Europe, reports Reuters.

"It's going to be a big agreement, and it's going to involve more than Ukraine ... I could even say it might involve all of Europe. It's going to be a big, beautiful agreement, and everyone's going to be thrilled," Trump said.

Trump has frequently predicted an agreement to end Europe's deadliest conflict since World War Two was close. However, negotiations have picked up in recent weeks.

Ukraine's allies are working for a "just and sustainable" end to the war ahead of US-mediated talks next week in Abu Dhabi, Nato said yesterday.

Talks in Brussels on Thursday involving Nato, US, Ukrainian and European officials "built on productive discussions in Miami and Oslo and sought to advance a just and sustainable end to the war in Ukraine", an alliance spokeswoman said.

Jared Kushner, the president's envoy and son-in-law, said the United States was working on "a broader European security architecture that can help establish the conditions for lasting peace", reports AFP.

Kushner, who participated in the Brussels talks via videolink, said that Washington's "objective is to develop practical arrangements that address the security concerns of all sides".

"We are exploring five principal goals: permanent security consultations, reliable crisis communications, greater military transparency, reciprocal measures to reduce escalation risks, and an enduring framework for long-term European security and stability," he posted online.

## IN BRIEF



# Israeli fire kills five in Gaza

## Woman, children among dead

**AFP,** *Gaza City*

Israeli strikes and gunfire on Thursday killed five people across Gaza, including a woman and a 12-year-old boy, rescue services in the war-ravaged Palestinian territory told AFP.

Mahmoud Bassal, spokesman for Gaza's civil defence agency, told AFP that a 12-year-old boy was killed by Israeli gunfire east of the Al-Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza.

A few kilometres away, near the town of Al-Zawayda, two people were killed in separate Israeli strikes, he added. The nearby Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital confirmed to AFP that all three were dead on arrival.

In southern Gaza, a woman was killed by Israeli gunfire near the city of Khan Yunis, Bassal said. Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis confirmed her death to AFP.

Later in the day, "one person was killed and several others injured in an Israeli drone strike... west of Gaza City," Bassal said.

ILLEGAL MIGRANTS

# Belgium to allow home searches

**AFP,** *Brussels*

Belgium yesterday approved a law allowing police to detain undocumented migrants in their homes in certain instances, despite fierce criticism from left-wing parties and human rights groups.

The plans have been the subject of heated debate in Belgium for many years.

The law will allow police, accompanied by immigration office staff, to enter the home of an individual who has been barred from remaining in Belgium, or another residence where the person is living, in order to make an arrest.

The individuals targeted will be those who are "subject to a removal order" or "liable to pose a threat to public order and national security".

An investigating judge must give the order before police enter any home.

**An investigating judge must authorise home searches, with police allowed to seek a locksmith's help if necessary**



**7 INDIAN STATES**

# EC gives left-out voters chance to join final rolls

**AGENCIES**

India's Election Commission (EC) yesterday gave a fresh chance to electors of seven states who were marked as Absent, Shifted, Dead and Duplicate (ASDD), and whose names could not be included in the draft rolls during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise there.

The EC wrote to the chief electoral officers of Delhi, Maharashtra, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Telangana and Nagaland, asking them to facilitate the inclusion of such electors in the final rolls.

The decision covers those who were issued enumeration forms but whose forms were not received back, resulting in their exclusion from the draft, reports NDTV online.

It essentially gives a second chance to such people in states where the SIR is on at present.

The opposition has been accusing the EC of deleting the names of crores of eligible citizens from the electoral rolls at the behest of the BJP.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**
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**Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited**
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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | DMTCL/073/NPS-14/EM/OTM/2026-27 | Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for Building Management System (BMS) and Audio-Visual System installed at MRT Line-6 Depot under Electrical Department. | 1367174 | 05-Nov-2026 21:00:00 | 17-Nov-2026 14:00 | 17-Nov-2026 15:00 |
| 02 | DMTCL/070/NPS-11/EM/OTM/2026-27 | Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for Sewage Treatment Plant and Effluent Treatment Plant, Booster, Borewell and Sump pumps installed at MRT Line-6 Depot under Electrical Department. | 1367031 | 05-Nov-2026 21:00 | 18-Nov-2026 14:00 | 18-Nov-2026 15:00 |
| 03 | DMTCL-129/NPS-37/ EM/OTM/2026-27 | Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for LV Panel, UPS & DG Set installed at MRT Line-6 Station Under Electrical Department | 1367023 | 05-Nov-2026 21:30 | 19-Nov-2026 10:00 | 19-Nov-2026 11:00 |
| 04 | DMTCL-064/NPS-05/EM/OTM/2026-27 | Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for Fire Protection Suppression & Fire Alarm System installed at MRT Line-6 Station under Electrical Department | 1366918 | 05-Nov-2026 21:00 | 19-Nov-2026 10:00 | 19-Nov-2026 11:00 |
| 05 | DMTCL-066/NPS-07/EM/OTM/2026-27 | Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for STP & Pump Set installed at MRT Line-6 Station under Electrical Department | 1366914 | 05-Nov-2026 21:00 | 18-Nov-2026 14:00 | 18-Nov-2026 15:00 |
| 06 | DMTCL-063/NPS-04/EM/OTM/2026-27 | Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for Building Management System (BMS) installed at MRT Line-6 under Electrical Department | 1366891 | 05-Nov-2026 21:00 | 17-Nov-2026 10:00 | 17-Nov-2026 11:00 |

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



# Strengthen labour migration oversight

## Protect our migrant workers from fraudulent recruitment and trafficking

The government's decision to make ministry approval mandatory for issuing immigration clearance to workers travelling to 12 countries, including Cambodia and Russia, is a necessary response to the growing concerns of recruitment fraud and human trafficking. However, according to a report in this daily, before this decision came, 44,122 Bangladeshis had already received immigration clearance for these 12 countries between January 2025 and October 30 this year. Of them, 27,647 received clearance for Cambodia, Russia, Laos and Belarus, all classified as Tier 3 countries in the US Department of State's 2026 Trafficking in Persons Report. This indicates that these countries don't fully meet minimum anti-trafficking standards and are not making significant efforts to do so. Our authorities should have scrutinised the recruitment arrangements much more closely.

In recent times, our workers promised legitimate jobs in Cambodia have been handed over to cyber scam networks and confined and forced to participate in online fraud, their passports confiscated. Some have also faced torture and demands for money for their release. In Russia, workers promised civilian jobs have allegedly been deceived or coerced into military service and sent to fight in the Ukraine war. The return of the bodies of three Bangladeshis from Cambodia in October, including a 23-year-old who travelled there with a BMET clearance, is a stark reminder of the authorities' failure.

As this daily reported before, traffickers lured aspiring migrants to Libya with promises of well-paid jobs in Greece, only to subject them to torture, extortion and dangerous sea crossings. In one case, a young man from Chandpur paid Tk 15 lakh to traffickers, and his family was forced to pay another Tk 11 lakh in ransom before he could be rescued. Such cases expose how trafficking networks operate across borders, often with local intermediaries and international collaborators. A recent BRAC study found that 98 percent of cyber scam victims did not receive the jobs they had been promised, while 90 percent were forced or deceived into online scams. Concerningly, 66 percent were recruited through middlemen. These findings show how easily recruiters exploit aspiring migrants through fraudulent job offers.

**The latest directive should be treated as a temporary safeguard while the government establishes a reliable monitoring and verification system.**

The latest directive, therefore, should be treated as a temporary safeguard while the government establishes a reliable monitoring and verification system. Before granting clearance, BMET must independently verify employers, job offers, contracts, visa categories and recruitment arrangements, rather than relying solely on information provided by the recruiting agencies. Our diplomatic missions in destination and transit countries should also be involved in checking the legitimacy of employers and ensuring that workers are not exposed to forced labour or other forms of exploitation.

At the same time, the authorities must hold recruiting agencies and intermediaries accountable for deception and trafficking. This requires investigating complaints, tracing financial transactions, and prosecuting those involved. Workers and their families must also have access to clear information about legitimate recruitment channels, employment contracts, and the risks of travelling on inappropriate visas.

# Ensure accountability in all recruitment

## Probe into police constable recruitment must prompt wider scrutiny of political influence

A police investigation into the irregularities in constable recruitment during the Awami League regime has exposed the extent to which political influence and corruption can undermine public institutions. The probe found that at least 1,173 serving constables had used fake permanent addresses to secure jobs under district-based quotas between 2014 and 2024, 980 of them recruited in Dhaka alone. It also found other irregularities, including political interference, preferential treatment, and test score manipulation. This warrants a thorough investigation and appropriate action against those responsible.

While we welcome efforts to uncover past wrongdoings and establish accountability for corruption and abuse of power under previous administrations, such efforts must not become a selective exercise that focuses only on the irregularities under the Awami League or the interim regime. The culture of political patronage and undue influence over public institutions has not necessarily changed with the exchange of power. Indeed, allegations of politically motivated appointments, promotions and placements at different levels have continued under the current government. There have also been claims of political screening of candidates taking government job recruitment tests, as well as decisions being made or withheld on political considerations. These concerns deserve rigorous scrutiny as well, because changing the people in power means little if the practices that undermine public institutions remain unchanged.

The constable recruitment investigation has also raised questions about the responsibility of the officials who facilitated or overlooked these irregularities. The Police Headquarters is now verifying the findings before submitting the report to the home ministry. However, accountability must extend beyond the recruits who allegedly used fake addresses. District police chiefs and others involved in verifying, recommending and approving appointments must also be investigated where there is evidence of wrongdoing. The Narayanganj case, where 18 constables were dismissed over recruitment irregularities but the then superintendent of police was later promoted, underscores the need for accountability for those in positions of authority.

Above all, the government must address the systemic weaknesses that allowed such practices to thrive. The district-based recruitment system, in which SPs make the final recommendations for constable appointments, must have effective safeguards against political interference, bribery and favouritism. Transparency in the selection process, independent oversight, and clear accountability for officials are essential to restore public confidence in police recruitment. The government must demonstrate its commitment to good governance by addressing corruption, political patronage and undue influence within its own administration.

# The real deficit in higher education

**BLOWIN' IN THE WIND**



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

**SHAMSAD MORTUZA**

The government made a bold and necessary move to avoid the populist temptation of cosmetically improving results for political gain, taking a step towards establishing academic integrity by undertaking an impartial grading process at public examinations. The process has resulted in a low pass percentage in this year's higher secondary and equivalent exams. A low pass rate, however, does not automatically guarantee educational excellence. Nearly half of the candidates failed the exams, many of them due to their poor performance in English and ICT. This failure is a sorry sign for a country that keeps drumming the need for joining the 4IR bandwagon and watching the future through the demographic dividend window.

For the successful 6,46,685 HSC and equivalent candidates, there is a sudden availability of extra seats at the tertiary level. According to the University Grants Commission (UGC), there are nearly 15 lakh undergraduate places for the 2026-27 academic session. This is not a final vacancy count as earlier cohorts and supplementary candidates will also seek admission. Nevertheless, the smaller pool of successful students has sharpened the prospect of a much larger number of unfilled places.

The familiar anxiety after every HSC exam about finding placement in higher education has been replaced by the news of extraordinary abundance in our universities. The apparent luxury of empty seats carries the sighs of failed students as well as the signs of unplanned expansion at the tertiary level. Universities, colleges and programmes have multiplied without sufficient coordination between academic resources, student aspirations, and the opportunities awaiting graduates. We have become accustomed to institutions opening randomly, paying less attention to whether those places constitute an education that students have reason to choose.

The reality is, not all seats are equally desirable. A place in an unwanted discipline cannot compensate for an inaccessible place in a preferred programme with credible employment prospects. These opportunities differ in price, location, resources and eligibility. Their addition produces numerical abundance while leaving particular shortages unresolved. For instance, the reported national total includes affiliated colleges and private universities. Quite possibly, the successful candidates would like to vie for the 63,656 places at public universities.

Then again, the reputation of a public university does not automatically make all its programmes attractive. For instance, Chittagong University's official fifth-call notice of May 3, 2026 recorded 152 vacancies among 310 places across six subjects. Persian Language and Literature and general Sanskrit admitted no one against 40 and 5 available seats; Bangladesh Studies filled 28 out of 70. Most public universities allow internal migration to accommodate the incoming students' choices. Dhaka University announced that special migration filled 340 places in August 2025. These seats are often left empty due to delayed offers, qualifying thresholds, missed deadlines, and movement between institutions.

Over the years, many of these traditional public universities have relied heavily on the government support and the guaranteed student flow due to their affordability and accessibility. The market-driven programmes and performance-oriented policies at private universities have posed existential threats to their public counterparts. Many of the better students, who receive generous scholarships and tuition waivers, are now opting for top-tier private universities as their main study destination.

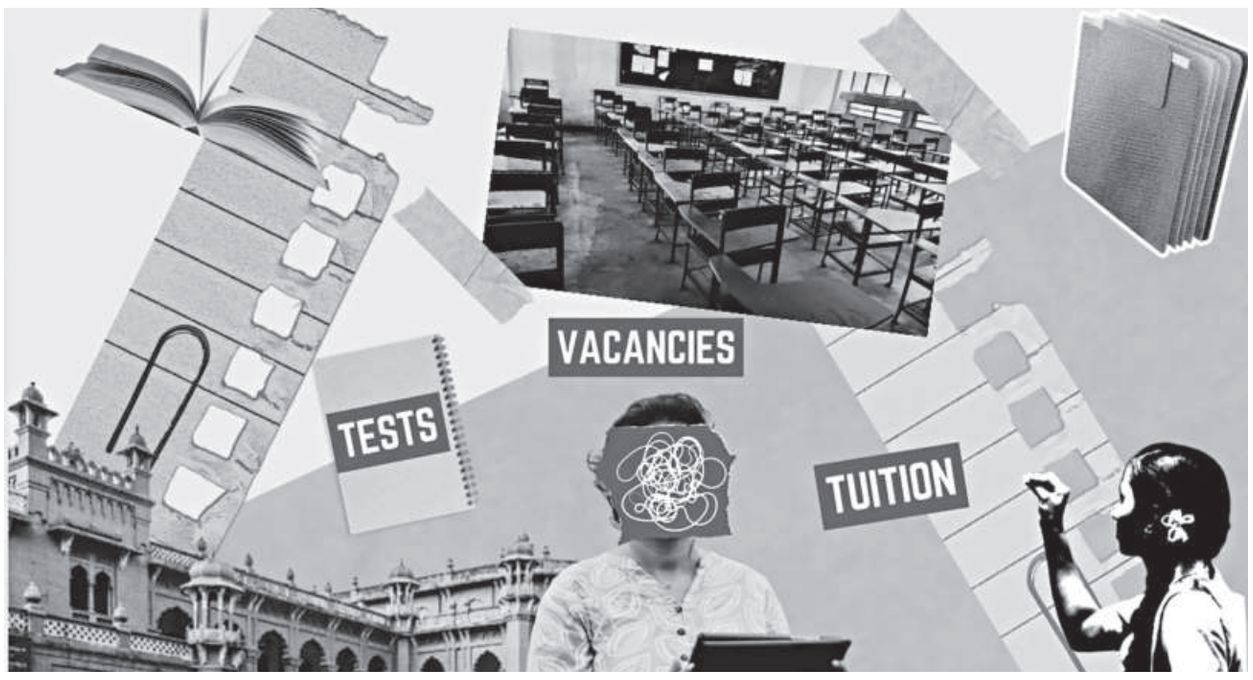
However, practical considerations must be weighed in before deciding on a university. A student may obtain an affordable public university place in an unwanted subject while a preferred programme at a credible private institution remains beyond reach. Tuition is only part of the calculation; cumbersome admission procedures, cluster tests, overlapping admission test schedules, accommodation, transport, equipment, and the possibility of losing income also matter.

As a university administrator, I recognise the pressure that falling enrolment places on institutions. For private universities that rely on student tuition fees and budgets, fewer students means compromised academic services in terms of faculty, scholarships and research. But students cannot be asked to rescue institutions by accepting unsuitable programmes. Nor should financial anxiety lead us to admit students without adequate support or reduce the academic resources that make a degree worth pursuing.

Still, many students are forced to choose newer or regional universities that have not shaped into fuller institutions. They have the potential to transform their local communities and contribute to the regional economy. But for these institutions to thrive, we need a concerted policy of decentralisation and to ensure that students find confidence in their teachers, laboratories, accommodation, safety and transport. For better teachers to relocate themselves to newer campuses, the regional towns need to provide the basic living standards. If teachers cannot send their children to a proper school or get standard medical services, they are unlikely to dedicate their time to a peripheral campus. Unfortunately, our unplanned growth of universities focused mostly on bricks and mortar, not the ecosystem.

Weak demand for particular disciplines also requires a considered response. Languages, literature, philosophy, history and basic sciences that have grown out of fashion must reinvent themselves by embracing rigorous scholarship and incorporating communication, research, digital competence and other capabilities students can use. At the same time, expanding fashionable degrees without adequate resources or realistic career guidance can reproduce disappointment under more marketable names.

There are students who will look beyond Bangladesh altogether. How many of this year's HSC cohort will explore overseas study is not yet established. A British Council official recently estimated that 55,000-60,000 Bangladeshi students go abroad for higher education annually. That figure covers higher education generally, not necessarily from this year's HSC cohort. The trend indicates that students who find a suitable foreign programme may leave while a domestic place remains empty. Others will investigate scholarships and partnerships but stay because funding does not materialise. We need to understand these decisions rather than assume that every departure is a rejection of Bangladesh or every unfilled seat represents surplus educational capacity. As a strategic intervention, our universities need to invest in internationalisation. Credible joint programmes and exchanges can widen access to international education at home.




VISUAL: **ALIZA RAHMAN**

The objective should be informed mobility and better domestic provision, giving students sound reasons to choose among them.

The HSC and equivalent exam results have shown the government's sincerity in dealing with uncomfortable outcomes. Higher education now demands the same level of transparency. We need transparent programme costs, audited operational capacity, coordinated admissions and evidence of learning, retention, and graduate outcomes. Public investment and private expenditure should both pursue dependable education. The task is to turn the honesty demanded of examination scripts into honesty about our universities. Empty seats should concern their administrators; the absence of affordable, suitable and credible choices should concern us all.

# Bangladesh needs a bipartisan US strategy



*Dr M Kabir Hassan is professor of finance in the Department of Economics and Finance at Louisiana State University in New Orleans, US.*

**M KABIR HASSAN**

For Bangladesh, the impact of the US midterm election results could well extend to its RMG industry, investments, and diplomatic relations. The now-majority party in Congress will, come January 2027, help shape the environment in which Bangladesh, among other countries, pursues its economic and strategic interests. However, expecting more favourable relations or outcomes would be unwise. Bangladesh must pursue a strategy that holds up regardless of what happens in Washington.

Elections for the House or Senate don't elect the president, but they can shape oversight, spending priorities, and the potential for new laws. The administration can continue implementing trade and international relations policy even if the opposition party takes control of one or both chambers. More intense scrutiny and negotiation could happen in that case. In either case, Bangladesh is not guaranteed to receive concessions.

The economic stakes are significant. According to the United States Census Bureau, US imports from Bangladesh totalled more than $9.47 billion, while exports to Bangladesh totalled around $2.39 billion in 2025. This trade imbalance matters in Washington because the US values foreign access to the American market, as well as opportunities for American producers. Bangladesh needs to explain the mutual benefits of trade relations with the US in terms of employment, commercial, and supply chain gains.

Dhaka's trade diplomacy strategy should therefore look beyond requests for favourable treatment. RMG manufacturers, US consumers and producers all share an interest in a stable trade environment. Bangladesh should seek partnerships with all these parties to show how sudden cost increases disrupt purchasing decisions and established supply chains.

The bilateral trade agreement announced earlier this year covers a wide range of areas. Following the midterm election, Bangladesh's first order of business should be to practically analyse those as well as its trade relations with the US. To do this, the commerce ministry should work closely with both exporters and Bangladesh's officials in Washington. It should identify which elements of the trade relationship are currently functioning properly, which remain unaddressed, and which have the potential to yield measurable gains. Export-based businesses depend on accurate information on relevant duties, product coverage, and compliance standards to plan strategically. Political reassurance cannot be a substitute for this.

**The bilateral trade agreement announced earlier this year covers a wide range of areas. Following the midterm election, Bangladesh's first order of business should be to practically analyse those as well as its trade relations with the US. To do this, the commerce ministry should work closely with both exporters and Bangladesh's officials in Washington.**

Labour reforms should be central to Bangladesh's efforts in this regard. Ensuring workers' rights to associate freely, providing safer workplaces, and enforcing labour law effectively serve the country's development interests. Labour reforms also support its case with lawmakers, consumers, and investors in the US.

Investment should receive equal focus. While diplomacy may bring new opportunities, investors ultimately assess how contracts are enforced, whether regulations are consistent, whether sufficient energy is available, and whether a normal business environment exists where they can operate without unexpected challenges. Bangladesh should select a few commercially viable opportunities in the energy, logistics and technology sectors and develop them with transparency in all procurement practices and credibility in all forms of dispute resolution.

Commercial diplomacy also needs to maintain financial discipline. All purchases from the US should meet legitimate requirements and withstand scrutiny based on cost, financing options, and procurement. Any expensive commitment made solely to demonstrate political goodwill could create long-term fiscal or foreign exchange burdens. Strengthening relations should increase mutually beneficial trade while protecting domestic economic interests.

From a diplomatic standpoint, Dhaka needs to maintain continued involvement at every level of the US government. While maintaining good relationships with the White House and Department of State remains important, involvement with relevant congressional committees, congressional staff, and business constituents is also valuable. To maintain relationships with both sides, Bangladesh must consistently present factual information about itself. Assuming that direct access to certain individuals or partisan affinity will build significant diplomatic influence over time will make the country vulnerable to losing influence when the political climate changes.

The Rohingya crisis must continue to be a major diplomatic concern. The UN published a revised response plan seeking $710.5 million to support refugee populations and host communities in 2026. Bangladesh should make a continued case for humanitarian aid while continuing to advocate for greater international accountability regarding conditions allowing for a safe, voluntary and sustainable return for Rohingya refugees. Congressional engagement should link humanitarian relief efforts with regional stability and transparent aid deployment.

For the next six months, Bangladesh should focus on three priorities: a coordinated bipartisan engagement strategy in Washington; a publicly stated programme of trade and investment reforms with defined objectives; and a concerted diplomatic campaign to promote ongoing support for Rohingya refugees. All three priorities require designated institutional responsibilities with routine review. The diaspora community can offer expertise and connections, but professional diplomacy must provide direction.

Regardless of the results in the US midterm election, Bangladesh will still need to carry out domestic reforms, negotiate carefully, and maintain institutional credibility. It should prepare to address the next Congress with evidence-based proposals and a cohesive explanation of mutual interests that the two countries can pursue together.

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# Understanding November 7 beyond competing political narratives



*Mohiuddin Ahmad is a writer and researcher of Bangladesh's political history.*

■ MOHIUDDIN AHMAD



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

Some days slip into history almost unnoticed, their significance revealed only with the passage of time. Others arrive amid uncertainty and upheaval, carrying questions that generations later continue to ponder. November 7, 1975 was such a day.

For some, it entered the national memory as a soldiers' and people's uprising. For others, it was unmistakably a military coup. Some regard it as an extension of the turbulence unleashed by the events of August 1975; others see it as the beginning of a new political era whose consequences shaped Bangladesh for decades. However, no matter which interpretation one may embrace, one thing remains beyond dispute: by the morning of November 7, Bangladesh had become the stage of a profound national crisis.

Barely four years had passed since independence. The young republic, born in sacrifice and sustained by the dreams of liberation, entered one of the most turbulent chapters of its existence. Political authority was contested, institutions were strained, and competing visions of the nation's future collided with growing intensity. The events of November 7 were not the work of a single actor, nor the triumph of a solitary ideology. Rather, they emerged from the convergence of powerful currents that had been gathering force for many months.

The Bangladesh that stepped into 1975 was still a fragile nation in the making. Economic distress, the devastating famine of 1974, administrative shortcomings, political polarisation, and mounting public disillusionment combined to cast a long shadow over the country's future. Against this backdrop, the establishment of one-party rule in the name of BAKSAL marked a defining moment in the nation's political evolution. Its supporters portrayed it as a bold attempt to foster national unity and accelerate state-building. Its critics, however, saw it as a departure from pluralist democracy and a concentration of political power. The debate remained unresolved when the dramatic events of August 15 abruptly transformed the political landscape. President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated. His government collapsed.

If August 15 brought one political order to an end, it did not establish another with certainty. Within the armed forces, opinions were deeply divided over the events and the nation's future course. Then came the developments of November 3. Led by Brig Khaled Mosharraf and a group of fellow officers, a fresh intervention shifted the balance of power within the military. Maj Gen Ziaur Rahman was placed under restrictions.

Public perceptions at the time were equally diverse. Many believed that political forces associated with the pre-August order might soon regain influence. Accurate or not, such perceptions became part of the political atmosphere of the period, and atmospheres often shape history as powerfully as facts.

While developments within the military commanded national attention, another political current was gathering momentum beyond the barracks. The Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), which emerged during the early years of independence, became a significant force among leftist political sections. Its leaders argued that the promises of liberation remained unfulfilled. Political independence, they maintained, must be accompanied by a deeper social transformation.

**The enduring significance of November 7 lies not merely in the fate of any single individual but in its place within the wider currents of history. The events contributed to the emergence of a new political landscape in Bangladesh. In the years that followed, Ziaur Rahman gradually became the country's central political figure. At the same time, the upheavals of 1975 underscored the decisive role of the armed forces during a period of institutional fragility.**

The JSD advocated far-reaching changes in the relationship between society and the armed forces. Among its most prominent figures was Lt Col (retd) Abu Taher, who led the party's armed wing and became increasingly active within the cantonments. To his supporters, Taher embodied a radical democratic vision rooted in revolutionary ideals. To his critics, his ideas appeared impractical, even destabilising.

By the evening of November 6, 1975, uncertainty hung heavily over the capital. Rumours moved swiftly through the streets. Military installations simmered with tension. Reliable information became scarce, while speculation travelled faster than truth. There was a growing sense that events were moving towards another decisive turning point, though few could foresee what shape it would take. Then, on the morning of November 7, change arrived.

The events unfolded with remarkable speed. Groups of soldiers mobilised, so did political activists. Commands and counter-commands echoed through the military establishment. Power dynamics that had seemed fixed only hours earlier suddenly became uncertain. It was within this atmosphere of confusion and momentum that Ziaur Rahman was released, an event that quickly assumed national significance.

The days that followed revealed the complexity of the moment. The various actors who had contributed to the events were united neither by purpose nor by vision. Military officers, political activists, ideological movements, and state institutions often imagined very different futures. As the situation evolved, these differences became increasingly apparent. Some prioritised stability, some demanded political transformation, and others aspired to a broader social revolution.

The story of Abu Taher captures many of the contradictions of this turbulent period. Within weeks of the November events, his fortunes changed dramatically. His relationship with the emerging political order grew increasingly strained. Ultimately, he was arrested, tried, and executed. His legacy remains contested, inspiring admiration in some quarters and criticism in others.

The enduring significance of November 7 lies not merely in the fate of any single individual but in its place within the wider currents of history. The events contributed to the emergence of a new political landscape in Bangladesh. In the years that followed, Ziaur Rahman gradually became the country's central political figure. At the same time, the upheavals of 1975 underscored the decisive role of the armed forces during a period of institutional fragility.

Viewed from the distance of half a century, November 7 appears less as a simple tale of victory or defeat than as a national crossroads. At that crossroads stood competing visions of Bangladesh: the legacy of the Liberation War, the memory of August, the uncertainties of November, the aspirations of political activists, the calculations of military officers, and the hopes and anxieties of ordinary citizens. For a brief yet consequential moment, all these forces converged.

Each participant believed that they were shaping the destiny of the nation in their own way. But history rarely unfolds according to a single design. The significance of November 7 lies precisely in its complexity. It was neither the achievement of one man nor the triumph of one ideology. Rather, it was a moment when powerful historical currents met, collided, and altered the course of Bangladesh's political journey.

For this reason, the events remain not only influential but also enduringly contested, continuing to invite reflection, debate, and reinterpretation as the nation looks back upon one of the most pivotal days in its modern history.

# *Cleaner cities begin with better waste management*



*Dr Nawshad Ahmed, a retired UN official, is an economist and urban planner. He can be reached at nawnahid@gmail.com.*

■ NAWSHAD AHMED

The age-old method of garbage collection and disposal by municipalities and city corporations calls for scrutiny. Municipal vans collect waste from households and workplaces and dump it at disposal sites, which are largely open spaces. Due to inadequate capacity, solid waste is also frequently dumped in drains and canals, severely polluting surface water and groundwater. One primary reason for inadequate garbage collection and processing is the scant resources of local bodies, but not all urban local governments are equally deficient in funding. With serious commitment, all city corporations and bigger pourashavas could build reasonably good systems for waste management. However, one upazila-level urban local body, Saidpur Pourashava in Nilphamari district, has shown that with determination, it can establish a modern faecal sludge treatment plant (FSTP). An FSTP collects and safely manages human waste and sludge from homes and other establishments, while integrated waste treatment systems can convert waste into reusable products such as organic manure, treated water and electricity. As an old railway town, Saidpur Pourashava has a population of 142,749, with roughly 33,472 households in an area of 34.43 square kilometres, according to figures cited from the 2022 census. Established in 1958, Saidpur is one of the largest pourashavas in Bangladesh in terms of area. One of the primary duties of the pourashava is the collection and disposal of solid waste and maintenance of drainage systems, which the local body has taken seriously.

Saidpur Pourashava, under the leadership of its mayor and councillors, established a solid waste and faecal sludge co-composting treatment plant on an area of 170 decimals (approximately 1.7 acres) of land five years ago. According to a WaterAid assessment, Saidpur generates approximately 33,245 tonnes of solid waste annually, of which about 51 percent is collected. Shops, offices, hospitals, clinics and other establishments also generate significant amounts of solid waste. The pourashava workers collect solid waste and a good amount of faecal sludge to feed into the co-composting treatment plant. Municipal vacuum trucks ranging in capacity from 1,000 to 3,500 litres, with the help of private sweepers, collect sludge from residential septic tanks and market areas for use in the plant. This sludge is emptied into 24 drying beds, where it undergoes a scientific drying process before being mixed with dried organic waste and sawdust and converted into agricultural co-compost fertiliser, which is marketed to local farmers. Although the plant took several years to establish and has yet to process all the solid waste and human sludge of the entire pourashava, it has the potential to handle larger quantities if additional municipal workers and equipment can be made available. The facility has a faecal sludge treatment capacity of approximately 26 cubic metres per day. The FSTP uses rainwater and solar energy to enhance sustainability. It has a reported solar power capacity of around 10 kW, with electricity transferred to the national grid.

**I believe the social and health benefits of FSTPs should be given greater weight than financial costs and benefits. The role played by such plants in disease prevention is substantial, since they reduce breeding grounds for mosquitoes and rodents, helping lower the risks of dengue and other infections. Safe treatment of faecal waste can also reduce the risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera. Such plants will also help eliminate the open dumping of solid waste, as is commonly practised in urban areas of Bangladesh.**

The plant was established at an initial cost of Tk 7 crore and has been upgraded with an additional Tk 2 crore, with technical support from WaterAid Bangladesh. It started producing fertiliser in February 2021. After visiting the plant site recently and talking to municipal officials, technical personnel at the plant and residents, it can be confidently said that this type of plant can be established in other urban areas of the country to improve environmental conditions and potentially become financially viable by producing organic fertiliser and electricity if additional machines are installed. In another waste management plant in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar, the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) uses faecal sludge and solid waste to produce fertiliser, clean water, recoverable plastic and electricity. Built at a cost of Tk 60 crore, it reportedly has a power generation capacity of 40–50 kW. It produces distilled water and ash as well.

While most cities and towns in Bangladesh are reeling under the pressure of huge quantities of unprocessed solid waste every day, posing a serious threat to human health, these two models of solid waste and faecal sludge management should be seriously considered for replication in all urban areas as soon as possible. The establishment and management of such plants could be undertaken jointly through cooperation among urban local bodies, DPHE and NGOs specialising in waste management system development.

As I gather information about the possibility of replicating the above pilot initiatives in other urban areas of Bangladesh, the main question that arises is the financial viability of solid waste and faecal sludge co-composting treatment plants. However, in the case of urban waste management, I believe the social and health benefits of such plants should be given greater weight than financial costs and benefits. The role played by such plants in disease prevention is substantial, since they reduce breeding grounds for mosquitoes and rodents, helping lower the risks of dengue and other infections. Safe treatment of faecal waste can also reduce the risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera. Such plants will also help eliminate the open dumping of solid waste, as is commonly practised in urban areas of Bangladesh. A good part of this waste is also regularly burned, producing toxic pollutants, including black carbon, and foul odours, while improper waste disposal contributes to groundwater contamination. A cleaner city will improve mental and physical health and reduce people's out-of-pocket treatment costs. Above all, proper waste management will prevent raw sewage and untreated leachate from polluting water bodies, groundwater and agricultural land. Therefore, to improve the liveability of our cities and towns, solid and liquid waste management must be modernised without delay.

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বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ঢাকাস্থ খিলগাঁও পুনর্বাসন এলাকার ভূমি বরাদ্দ কমিটির গত ২৭/১০/২০২৬ তারিখে অনুষ্ঠিত সভার সিদ্ধান্ত মোতাবেক খিলগাঁও পুনর্বাসন এলাকার ক্ষতিগ্রস্থ এওয়ার্ডী/এওর্য়াডীর ওয়ারিশগণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, যে সমস্ত ক্ষতিগ্রস্থ এওয়ার্ডী/এওয়ার্ডীর ওয়ারিশগণ তাদের ক্ষতিগ্রস্থ জমির পরিবর্তে এখনও খিলগাঁও পুনর্বাসন এলাকায় প্লট বরাদ্দ পান নাই, তাদের স্ব-স্ব ক্ষতিগ্রস্থ জমির পরিমান, সিএস দাগ নং, মৌজার নাম এবং এল এ কেইস নং উল্লেখপূর্বক হুকুম দখলকৃত জমির কাগজপত্রাদি/দলিলাদিসহ প্লট বরাদ্দের জন্য আগামী ০৭/১২/২০২৬ তারিখের মধ্যে খিলগাঁও পুনর্বাসন এলাকার ভূমি বরাদ্দ কমিটির চেয়ারম্যান ও মাননীয় সংসদ সদস্য, ঢাকা-৯ অথবা নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, ঢাকা গণপূর্ত বিভাগ-৪, ঢাকা ও সদস্য সচিব, খিলগাঁও পুনর্বাসন এলাকার ভূমি বরাদ্দ কমিটি বরাবর আবেদন করার জন্য আহবান করা যাচ্ছে। উল্লেখ্য, কোন এওয়ার্ডী/এওয়ার্ডীর ওয়ারিশগণ পূর্বে আবেদন করে থাকলেও পত্রিকায় বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের পর পুনরায় তাদেরকে আবেদন করতে হবে। উল্লিখিত সময়সীমা অতিক্রম হওয়ার পর আর কোন আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না।

(মোঃ মাসুদ রানা)
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী
ঢাকা গণপূর্ত বিভাগ-৪, ঢাকা
ও
সদস্য সচিব
খিলগাঁও পুনর্বাসন এলাকার ভূমি বরাদ্দ কমিটি
ঢাকা।

GD-2693

# MONALISA

## The smile that fans still remember

**SHAH ALAM SHAZU**

There was a time when Mozeza Ashraf Monalisa was instantly recognised wherever she went. She appeared in numerous popular advertisements and memorable television projects. She became one of the most familiar faces in Bangladesh's entertainment industry. Years later, although she has built a life in New York and stepped away from modelling and acting, the love of her fans has not diminished. In a conversation with The Daily Star, Monalisa looks back on the journey that made her a household name and talks about the life she leads today.

Looking back on her childhood, Monalisa recalls learning dance at Bulbul Lalitkala Academy in Dhanmondi during her school years. "I had a natural inclination towards dance from a very young age. My mother wanted me to pursue it. There was an advertising agency near our home, and someone from there approached my mother with a proposal for me to work as a model."

She remembers how the opportunity unfolded. "My mother and I visited the agency at a convenient time. They conducted a screen test and took some photographs. Actor Tariq Anam Khan was there as well. I was eventually selected and went on to model for a beauty product advertisement. That was a long time ago."

The advertisement changed her life almost overnight. "I became popular while I was still at school. Everyone knew me, and wherever I went, people recognised me. One advertisement brought me such widespread recognition. Gradually, I began modelling for several other brands, and my popularity spread across the country."

Her association with another popular brand later brought another wave of fame. "I did several advertisements for the brand, and they became immensely popular. People used to instantly recognise me wherever I went.

Recalling the overwhelming attention she received, Monalisa says hundreds of letters would arrive at her home. "I did not get around to reading most of them, but many were about love and admiration. Fans would also send sarees and flowers to our home, sometimes on my birthday and sometimes on ordinary days. It was quite something."

She particularly remembers how people would recognise her on the streets. "They would say, 'Look, there goes Monalisa!' One of the most common compliments was about my smile. People would tell me that my smile was as sweet as Monalisa's."

Having lived in New York for the past 10 years, she continues to receive affection from admirers. "Fans and well-wishers even travel from other states to meet me in New York. It feels wonderful to receive so much love."

Despite receiving numerous offers to act in commercial films during the peak of her popularity, Monalisa chose television and modelling instead. She made her acting debut in Arun Chowdhury's television drama ***Kagojer Phool***, opposite Mahfuz Ahmed.

Asked who played the biggest role in her journey, she does not hesitate. "My mother deserves the credit. Not just 100 percent, but 1,000 percent. I have come this far because she wanted me to."

Although she has stepped away from acting and modelling, Monalisa says the audience's affection has never faded. "Wherever I go, people treat me with respect and warmth. I have been living in America for many years, and I continue to receive that same love here."

Currently, Monalisa works as a manager at Tom Ford Cosmetics and also serves as a coordinator at a bank in the United States.

"By everyone's blessings, I am doing well," she says.



PHOTO: **SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED**

## TRENDY STREAMS

**Netflix:**
Black Doves




**Hulu:**
Phony




**Prime Video:**
The Greatest




**Apple TV+:**
Stick




**Hoichoi:**
Pressure Cooker




## OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA

**'Non-duality'**
October 30–November 10, 2026| 3:00pm–9:00pm
AFD, Dhanmondi




**'Monpakhi'**
November 6–12, 2026 | 3:00pm–8:00pm
Bhumi Gallery, Lalmatia




**'Café de Volte'**
November 20, 2026 | 6:00pm and 8:00pm onwards
Jatra Biroti, Banani






## TV TALKIES

### 'Nobody Wants This'

***Nobody Wants This*** is a romantic comedy about Joanne (Kristen Bell), an agnostic podcast host who meets Noah (Adam Brody), a Los Angeles rabbi, at a dinner party. The two hit it off, but dating a rabbi soon raises questions Joanne has never had to consider, including whether she would conver t to Judaism. Created by Erin Foster, the series also stars Justine Lupe as Joanne's sister and podcast co-host, Morgan, and Timothy Simons as Noah's brother, Sasha. The third season premiered on Netflix on October 22.



## WHAT'S PLAYING

### 'SWIM' by BTS

BTS's ***SWIM*** turns perseverance into something quieter than a victory speech. The lead single from the group's fifth album, ***ARIRANG***, imagines life as water: unpredictable and impossible to control, yet still worth moving through. Rather than fighting every current, the song argues for continuing at one's own pace.

Its alternative-pop production keeps that message light on its feet. A steady rhythm and open arrangement give members room to trade lines without letting the track swell into the kind of oversized anthem often expected from a major comeback.

Arriving after BTS's long group hiatus, ***SWIM*** also carries cultural weight. It presents their reunion not as a return to where they left off, but as an acceptance that time changes everyone.



## STYLE STATEMENT

### Lewis Hamilton

Lewis Hamilton brought a sharp, contemporary edge to formal dressing at the opening gala of the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles on September 19. The seven-time Formula One world champion wore an all-black Saint Laurent ensemble, designed under the creative direction of Anthony Vaccarello, that balanced classic tailoring with a relaxed, oversized silhouette. A double-breasted jacket with broad satin lapels and matching wide-leg trousers established the look.

Hamilton kept the accessories equally considered. A diamond necklace rested against his exposed chest, complemented by statement rings, a luxury wristwatch and oversized black sunglasses. The dark eyewear added an element of mystery, while the jewellery introduced a subtle contrast against the monochromatic outfit.

# Pabna-Dhaka direct train service from November 19

**OUR CORRESPONDENT,** *Pabna*

Pabna will get its first direct train service to Dhaka from November 19, meeting a longstanding demand from residents.

The Ministry of Railways approved a proposal from Bangladesh Railway for the two trains and issued a notice on Thursday, said its public relations officer Md Rejaul Karim Siddiki in a press release.

Under the approved schedule, the Pabna Provati Express (Train No 808) will leave Pabna at 8:00am and reach Dhaka at 2:10pm.

The return service, Pabna Godhuli Express (Train No 807), will depart Dhaka at 3:25pm and arrive in Pabna at 9:20pm.

Rail Minister Shaikh Rabiul Alam will inaugurate the service at Pabna Railway Station on November 19, after which commercial operations will begin, said Md Abu Hena Mostafa Alam, divisional railway manager of Paksey.

Initially, each train will have 12 coaches and stop at 10 stations along the route, he added.



PHOTO: **PALASH KHAN**

**Customers examine food items at stalls during the fifth edition of the Indigenous Food and Crops Fair 2026, jointly organised by Nagorik Uddyog and Adibashi Suhridbrindo, at the Parbatya Bouddha Sangha in Mirpur-13, Dhaka, yesterday.**

**COAST GUARD**

# Vessels named after 4 nat'l leaders and Joy Bangla renamed

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The government has approved new names for five Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) vessels, including four previously named after the national leaders assassinated inside Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

According to a home ministry letter issued on Thursday, BCGS Syed Nazrul has been renamed BCGS Firoz Kabir, BCGS Tajuddin as BCGS Nurul Islam, BCGS Mansur Ali as BCGS M Humayun Kabir, and BCGS Qamaruzzaman as BCGS Ashraf Siddiqui. BCGS Joy Bangla has been renamed BCGS Adomya Bangla.

The letter, signed by Masfika Hossain, senior assistant secretary of the ministry's Border-3 Branch, said the changes had received approval from the appropriate authority. It was sent to the Coast Guard director general in response to a letter dated October 27.

A home ministry source said the ministry had instructed the Coast Guard to rename the vessels. The Coast Guard then submitted proposed names for approval. The ministry's letter did not explain the reasons for the changes.

Lt Commander Sabbir Alam Suzan, assistant director (intelligence) of the Coast Guard, told The Daily Star that the four men whose names were chosen were Coast Guard personnel who died in the line of duty.

Firoz Kabir, a lieutenant commander, died during a nor'wester, he said. Nurul Islam was killed in an attack, while M Humayun Kabir died fighting pirates. Ashraf Siddiqui died during an operation, he added.

# Dengue threat unlikely to ease before December

FROM PAGE 12

institutions. It submits weekly reports to DNCC to support mosquito control activities.

According to the surveillance findings, nearly 70 percent of Aedes breeding sites are concentrated in a limited number of locations, including household drums and buckets, building basements, spaces between buildings, car parking areas, water meter facilities and water tanks.

"The key recommendation is community engagement. These containers are mostly located around people's homes. Therefore, effective Aedes mosquito control will not be possible without active community involvement," Bashar said.

Bashar identified the absence of targeted control measures and comprehensive, regular surveillance as major reasons behind Bangladesh's continued failure to contain dengue.

He said surveillance findings should guide dengue control policies and action plans for the coming year.

He also called for regular surveillance nationwide, saying breeding patterns and risk factors differed between localities such as Barguna and Bandarban.

"Every locality needs a regular surveillance system. Based on surveillance data and scientific evidence, we must develop specific action plans for each locality, city corporation and municipality," he said.

He suggested that the Ministry of Local Government coordinate surveillance and targeted interventions through local government institutions and specialised expert teams.

Bashar said around 20 percent of Aedes mosquitoes breed in household water containers such as drums and buckets. A regular water supply could reduce dependence on such storage.

He also questioned the need to install WASA meters inside water reservoirs, which can accumulate water and become breeding sites.

Other neglected sites include basement parking areas, stagnant water left after vehicle washing and spaces beneath buildings under construction.

"Through surveillance, we are identifying these breeding sites and making recommendations. But the problem is that the necessary action is not being taken. If effective action were taken based on these findings, mosquito breeding would decline," he said.

He warned that routine spraying and awareness campaigns alone would not contain dengue unless authorities acted on surveillance findings and eliminated specific breeding sources.

# A slip of the tongue cracks 5-year-old murder mystery

FROM PAGE 3

suspicion. I focused on him and brought him in for questioning," SI Anisur told The Daily Star.

During interrogation, Akash broke down and named three accomplices, triggering a nationwide manhunt. CID officers eventually arrested all five suspects, including the alleged mastermind, Hira Lal.

The other accused are Liakat Ali alias Jhanthu, 69; Shikal Saiji alias Liton Pagla alias Rubel, 40; and Niranjan Kumar Das, 43.

Rubel was apprehended from Dhaka's Shah Ali Mazar on July 15 with assistance from the then RAB-4, now SRB-4.

According to the CID, the parents of Manik and Hira had worked as government cleaners. Following their deaths, Hira allegedly embezzled their entire pension, fuelling resentment between the brothers.

Their relationship deteriorated further over a piece of ancestral land allocated to Manik by their parents, which is embroiled in a legal dispute involving the Red Crescent Society.

According to the CID's investigation findings, Manik frequently mistreated Hira over these disputes. Driven by humiliation, Hira allegedly decided to eliminate his brother.

He recruited four men who harboured their own grudges against Manik over the purchase, sale and consumption of narcotics. Manik had once slapped Jhanthu during an altercation, the investigating officer (IO) said.

According to the CID's findings, based on confessional statements made by two of the accused, Akash and Rubel, under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the four hitmen entered Manik's bedroom around 4:00am on June 30, 2021.

Akash pinned Manik down by the legs while Rubel and Niranjan held down his arms and chest. Liakat muffled his mouth, dragged him onto the floor, and slit his throat with a heavy cleaver (dao). The assailants fled after confirming that Manik was dead.

With all five suspects in custody and their confessional statements recorded, the CID has concluded its investigation recently.

"I have already sent a draft of the charge sheet to CID headquarters for final review before filing it in court," IO Anisur told The Daily Star.

# Malaysia lists 51 medical centres for Bangladeshi workers

FROM PAGE 12

Meanwhile, the government has fixed the medical examination fee for Malaysia-bound workers at Tk 8,000 and warned against overcharging and harassment.

Under an October 31 directive, selected workers can undergo examinations at any authorised centre, regardless of their recruiting agency. No centre can operate under the exclusive control of an agency.

Medical centres involved in overcharging, harassment or other irregularities will face legal action.

At a meeting on Thursday, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Ariful Haque Chowdhury expressed hope that the first two or three flights under the government's zero-cost recruitment initiative would depart for Malaysia in December.

The initiative aims to send 10,000 workers through BOESL without migration costs.

The minister also welcomed a proposal from recruiting agencies to keep private recruitment costs between Tk 2.5 lakh and Tk 3 lakh.

# How Zia rose to the centre of power

FROM PAGE 1

guard with a Sten gun. Zia was sitting on a sofa.

Moinul walked directly to the bedroom, where he found a visibly worried Khaleda sitting silently, alongside their two young sons, Tarique (now the prime minister) and Arafat.

Moinul instructed the captain to leave the drawing room and sat beside Zia.

In his memoir, "Ek generaler nirab shakkhya: Swadhinatar ek dashak" (it roughly translates to The Silent Testimony of a General: First Decade of Independence), Moinul recalled that Zia's first question was: "Where is Colonel Shafayat Jamil? I want to talk to him."

"You are now a prisoner on the orders of Colonel Shafayat Jamil. What will be the use of talking to him?" Moinul replied, urging the army chief to remain calm.

Moinul, who later rose to the rank of major general, provided a rare account of the early hours of November 3, when Zia was placed under confinement.

The detention was part of a coup launched by the chief of general staff, Khaled Mosharraf, aided by the Dhaka brigade commander, Shafayat Jamil.

The events unfolded amid the turmoil following the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975. Zia had become the army chief five days later.

The self-confessed killers consolidated their influence from Bangabhaban without holding formal government positions. Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmad had assumed the presidency, although largely ceremonial.

To many officers in the cantonment, the situation had become untenable. A section of senior officers organised to remove the rebels from Bangabhaban, by force if needed, under Khaled Mosharraf.

Documentation of what transpired in Bangladesh during the first week of that November of 1975 remains scarce. Much of what is known today comes from the recollections and testimonies of individuals from different quarters who witnessed or played a role in those tumultuous events. In some instances, internal investigations were reportedly conducted within the military, but the findings have rarely been made public.

**NOVEMBER 3 COUP**

In his book "Ekattorer muktijuddho, roktakto moddho August o shorojontromoy November", Shafayat Jamil wrote that the officers involved in the November 3 operation were planning a coup to restore discipline within the army and curb the undue influence of Bangabandhu's assassins who continued to reside at Bangabhaban.

"In reality, the November 3 coup was an armed protest against the August 15 assassination and the illegal usurpation of state power," he wrote.

Retired Brigadier General, M Sakhawat Hussain, in his book "Roktakto Dingulo: 1975-81", described the confrontation between the killers and Khaled Mosharraf as a "cold war" that began on November 3.

Khaled set several conditions for the officers at Bangabhaban: unconditional surrender of those involved in the August 15 coup, Zia's removal as army chief and appointment of a new chief, and dissolution of the cabinet followed by fresh appointments.

At one point of discussion Lieutenant Colonel Khandaker Abdur Rashid, who was among Mujib's assassins, and still residing in Bangabhaban, agreed that the tanks stationed at Bangabhaban and Suhrawardy Udyan would return to the cantonment. But he rejected the demand that the assassins vacate Bangabhaban and return to their respective units.

It was decided that Mushtaque would no longer remain president from that morning, in accordance with the ultimatum.

Khaled assured him that Zia would remain safe and firmly stated that he would not stain his hands with blood.

At one point, to exert psychological pressure, two fighter jets and two well-equipped helicopters began flying low over Bangabhaban, creating deafening noise. Tanks remained stationed at Bangabhaban and Suhrawardy Udyan. With no news broadcast on the radio for two days, people remained unaware of developments while rumours and speculation intensified.

**RESIGNATION OF ZIA**

Four national leaders were brutally killed inside Dhaka Central Jail in the early hours of November 3 in a pre-planned operation coinciding with the coup, wrote Sakhawat.

Realising that the murders could not remain concealed for long and would not be covered by the earlier indemnity ordinance, Rashid decided to flee Bangladesh immediately. The assassins secured Khaled's approval for their departure.

Earlier that day, Fourth Bengal officers had also obtained Zia's resignation letter from his residence.

According to Shafayet Jamil, Zia submitted his resignation at around 2:00pm.

"Our thinking was that, once the situation had stabilised and we had consolidated control, Zia could be appointed Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the United Nations," he wrote.

With Zia's resignation secured, there was no obstacle to Khaled becoming army chief any more, Sakhawat wrote. When the president was approached, however, he said the matter would be decided at the next day's cabinet meeting.

It was November 4 when Khaled and Shafayat learnt about the jail killings. Rashid, Farooq, Dalim and other August 15 assassins, along with their families, had already left for Bangkok the previous evening.

Shafayat became furious, describing Mushtaque as not only "an illegal president but also a murderer". He no longer wanted him to remain in office.

Khaled went to Bangabhaban the next day around noon, waiting for cabinet approval of his appointment as army chief. Tensions escalated when Shafayat arrived. Khaled and others were sitting silently while Mushtaque delayed the decision through a cabinet meeting.

Under mounting pressure, the president eventually approved Khaled's appointment as army chief.

After Khaled's promotion was approved, Mushtaque was informed about the jail killings. He feigned shock, infuriating Shafayat, who stormed into the cabinet room with several officers and confronted him.

Shafayet wrote he called Mustatque as "murderer and a usurper" and he cannot remain president and placed Mustaque under arrest. Shafayat also arrested several ministers.

Meanwhile, Awami League supporters took to the streets demanding justice for the jail killings. On November 5, Khaled formally received the insignia of army chief.

Later that evening, he briefed the chiefs and senior officials of the other armed services. After discussions, they agreed that Chief Justice Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem would become president.

According to Lieutenant Colonel (retd) MA Hamid's book "Tinti sena abbutthan o na bola kichhu kotha", Sayem took the oath on the morning of November 6.

**NOVEMBER 7**

As these developments unfolded, leaflets issued by the Biplobi Sainik Sangstha, an affiliate of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), and led by former Lieutenant Colonel Abu Taher, circulated widely in Dhaka Cantonment. They carried anti-officer slogans and sought to turn soldiers against the military leadership, writes Hamid in his book.

That night, Khaled was preoccupied with securing the position of chief martial law administrator (CMLA), despite repeated attempts by others to persuade him to remain deputy CMLA. The president would then become CMLA.

Meanwhile, the cantonment grew restive. JSD-led forces were also seen assembling at Ibrahimpur, Balurghat, Banani and other strategic locations close to the cantonment.

Then came the counter-coup.

As the sepoy mutiny began around midnight, a group of soldiers first appeared at Zia's residence and overpowered the guards. The area echoed with slogans such as "Sepai, Sepai, Bhai Bhai" and "General Ziaur Rahman Zindabad".

Some soldiers lifted Zia onto their shoulders and carried him to a waiting jeep. More soldiers and revolutionaries gathered as the news spread. Khaleda Zia stood on the balcony, watching the historic moment with anxiety and joy, wrote Hamid.

He also said people from different quarters also brought out processions around Dhaka.

Mutinous soldiers took Zia to the 2nd Field Artillery Unit. Taher arrived and urged him to go directly to the radio station, but senior officers advised against it. Instead, a recorded address by Zia was broadcast on the radio.

Hearing of the counter-coup, Khaled and two companions fled Bangabhaban in civilian clothes and went to the 10th East Bengal Regiment in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, where soldiers and officers killed them. Shafayat injured his leg while climbing over a wall at Bangabhaban and went into hiding.

**ZIA REINSTATED**

On November 7, Zia was reinstated as army chief. Later that day, he addressed agitated soldiers at army headquarters as they raised various demands.

Initially, he tried to calm them. When his verbal appeals failed, he unbuckled his military belt, threw it to the ground and declared: "If you raise so many demands, I no longer want to remain as army chief," Moinul wrote.

The dramatic gesture stunned the soldiers into silence and helped restore order at army headquarters, he added.

However, unrest continued for several more days. Soldiers and their supporters raised various demands, while many army officers were killed. Fearing further attacks, many officers left their post while Zia went round different units to quell the tension.

Military discipline was gradually restored, and tensions had largely subsided by November 10. Authorities subsequently arrested key figures accused of instigating the uprising, including Abu Taher, Major Jalil and several senior JSD leaders. Along with a number of military personnel involved in the mutiny, Taher was later tried and punished.

At a November 7 meeting at army headquarters, a new administrative arrangement was introduced. President Sayem was appointed CMLA, while the three service chiefs became deputy CMLAs.

The final stage of the 'revolution' placed Zia at the centre of national leadership, Mahfuz Ullah wrote in his book "President Zia: Rajnaitik Jiboni".

"The united position of the sepoys and the people brought the state called Bangladesh back to its rightful place from a chaotic position, and in that case, the characteristics of Zia's leadership worked as a pole star. Through the course of the events of that time, Zia ultimately became a charismatic leader," he wrote.

On November 19, 1976, Zia assumed the position of CMLA after Sayem stepped down. He became president on April 21, 1977.

His rule ended abruptly on May 30, 1981, when he was assassinated in Chittagong during a failed military coup.

# Four more die with measles-like symptoms

**UNB,** *Dhaka*

Four children died with measles-like symptoms in the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, bringing the country's combined tally of confirmed and suspected measles-related deaths to 1,276 this year.

The Directorate General of Health Services has classified all four latest fatalities as suspected measles deaths.

With these, the total number of suspected measles deaths has reached 1,171, while confirmed deaths from measles have remained the same at 105.

A total of 1,239 new suspected measles cases were reported during the 24-hour period, pushing the cumulative number of suspected cases nationwide to 2,36,714.

Meanwhile, 75 new confirmed measles cases were recorded, bringing the total number of laboratory-confirmed infections to 24,294.

# The low-value trap

FROM PAGE 12

11.75 percent to €29 per kg, while Chinese apparel prices experienced a minor 2.18 percent decline.

Among major EU apparel suppliers -- including China, Vietnam, Indiaa and Cambodia -- Bangladesh ranks second-to-last in unit export prices, sitting only above Pakistan, the cheapest supplier.

Conversely, international clothing retailers and brands demand low purchasing prices, citing cheap local labour, lower productivity, compliance gaps and the basic category of the apparel items manufactured in Bangladesh.

To compound matters, key regional competitors are already positioning ahead of Bangladesh in securing preferential market access.

The EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement took effect on August 1, 2020, eliminating 99 percent of tariffs, curbing red tape, and protecting geographic indications.

Meanwhile, negotiations for an EU-India FTA were formally announced on January 27, 2026, according to the India Brand Equity Foundation.

That deal is undergoing legal scrubbing ahead of a proposed signing in mid-December 2026, targeting full ratification by mid-2027 to eliminate tariffs on over 99 percent of Indian exports to the EU.

If Bangladesh cannot sign the FTA with the EU or secure the GSP Plus status soon, the local exporters will have to face 12.50 percent duty after the country's graduation from the least-developed country bracket in 2029, when India and Vietnam would be enjoying zero-duty benefits.

Workers need to be reskilled and upskilled, and at the same time, Bangladesh should also shift production to high end garment items to pay more to the workers, said Nazma Akter, president of Sommilito Garments Sramik Federation.

The salary of the Bangladeshi garment workers is lower compared with other countries mainly because of lower productivity, said Md Rezwan Selim, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Without any improvement in productivity or higher unit prices, the 140 percent hike in minimum wage desired by the protesting garment workers seem unlikely and untenable.

FICTION

# The kaboom coverage

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

The university administrative team thought that the threat was a prank, and a rather crude one at that. An email was sent to all the department heads, threatening to bomb the university on Wednesday at exactly 2 PM. Nevertheless, security was tightened for the next week, and it was decided not to create mass hysteria by letting the students know.

Naturally, the news spread within a few hours, and the bite-sized media houses were the first to pick it up. Some self-appointed sub-editor was going through his social media feed and saw a mutual friend's post about the bomb threat their university had received. Five minutes and three AI prompts later, it was posted as news on Bombshell Daily.

Around the same time, at the other end of town, in the newsroom of PrimeHub News, Rahat had been scrolling through his social media feed, trying to find content for his fifth article of the night. That'd finally fill his quota for the day and let him go home for the night.

On any other day, Rahat would've just pasted the post into AI, told it to write a full-fledged article and posted it on the website. But this was different. At 12:37 AM on that fateful Sunday night, Rahat saw something that no one else in the media trainwreck had the vision to see. He saw an opportunity.

Rahat knew a bomb threat deserved more than just a photocard on social media. No, it demanded more. He immediately called his editor, Subrata Bagchi, on his personal number. Mr Bagchi's personal number was off-limits, apart from exceptions, and to Rahat, this was an exception.

"Mr Bagchi," Rahat said before his editor could start shouting, "bomb threat at Atlantic University. This is big."

"It's some stupid student pulling off a prank, Rahat," said Mr Bagchi. "You shouldn't call me at 1:00 in the morning over this."

"No, sir. It's not about the actual threat. It's about what this threat could multiply into," said Rahat with a smile.

"What do you mean?" Mr Bagchi sat up.

"The email mentioned a time, sir," explained Rahat. "Wednesday, 2:00 PM. There have been cocktail and crude bomb blasts all over town in the past few months. Sure, they stirred up the internet for a while, but then people forgot about them the next day. Why? Because the coverage happened after the actual incident. That's the problem, sir. The media always arrives after the incident occurs. But now, for the first time ever, the media will be present before the incident."

The phone was dead silent on the other end. Rahat could hear Mr Bagchi's breathing, which was a good sign. For the first time ever, Mr Bagchi was listening.

"Think about it, sir: live coverage, a countdown, a drone's view of the blast, pre-blast talk shows, post-blast discussion sessions. The possibilities are endless," said Rahat. "At least a month's worth of photocards to be posted on our social media."

"But there aren't going to be any blasts, Rahat," said Mr Bagchi. "It's just some stupid, outraged kid on his laptop sending out angry emails."

"We don't need the blasts, sir!" explained Rahat. "We simply need the content we can generate out of it. We've got at least 72 to 96 hours before the deadline. Think of all the engagement we can generate before that!"

Mr Bagchi stayed quiet for a bit longer and hung up the phone. Fifteen minutes later, he was in the office along with the rest of his team, with Rahat in that big meeting room for the first time in his life.

"The next 72 hours are going to be big, gentlemen," Mr Bagchi explained to the room. "I want all of you in the office around the clock until Thursday. Right after we start, other channels are going to pick it up as well. We need to make sure we have all our content ready so that we can throw everything out at the same time without giving others the space to breathe."

The next 24 hours were utter chaos at the PrimeHub News office. Talk-show guests were brought in late at night and put in front of the camera to debate the bomb threat and discuss the government's failure to handle it. A countdown timer was put in the bottom corner of the broadcast. Four separate teams were dispatched immediately to cover every possible view of the campus. One of them was stationed on the rooftop of a nearby house to get the best possible view of the campus interior. Mr Bagchi was trying to get a helicopter in the air as well to get a bird's-eye view of the event.

Another team was sent to the Tamabil border of Bangladesh to report how Bangladeshis were migrating en masse out of the country, fearing impending terrorism. However, that team was only able to get footage of a few smugglers walking in and out across the border at night, along with a few cows unaware of international border protocols.

"Smugglers are citizens as well," explained Mr Bagchi over the phone. "Cows also have every right to fear terrorism and escape the country. Just get me the footage and let me handle the narrative."

The media on the other side of the border picked up the news as well and managed to mould it into their own agenda. The news spread like wildfire, on a scale unlike anything Rahat had imagined. Not just Atlantic University, but universities all across the country were shut down for fear of explosions. Protests, boycotts, mob attacks: the country faced more damage in the three days leading up to Wednesday than it would have in the actual explosion.

On Tuesday night, at around 8:30 PM, Rahat noticed Mr Bagchi hovering around his cubicle until he finally approached and said, "Rahat, we can't keep this thing alive much longer after 2 PM tomorrow. When people realise that the explosion was just a harmless prank, we won't be able to maintain our TRP ratings much longer."

"The last three days have been the experience of a lifetime, sir," Rahat said gratefully. "The channel has had more traffic in the past three days than in the rest of the year combined."

"Yes, it's truly unprecedented. But there's only one person who's ambitious enough to realise the true potential of this news." Mr Bagchi placed his hand on Rahat's shoulder. "You, Rahat. You were the only one who saw potential in this, and you're the only one who can comprehend how big this news can get if the explosion were to take place. We're talking about seven more days of live coverage, international engagement, a social media fiasco and coverage of the subsequent chain of events as well. It'll make our channel the biggest news channel in the country over the weekend."

"But as you said, sir, it's just some kid pulling a prank," said Rahat. "It's not really in our hands."

"But it can be, Rahat." Mr Bagchi walked with Rahat into his chamber and closed the door behind him. "We can just create a small explosion, nothing too outrageous. Just a small crude bomb."

Rahat was at a loss for words, too dumbfounded even to process what was being proposed.

"I've got someone on the inside," Mr Bagchi explained. "A security guard who'll let you in. The CCTV cameras will be off as well. It's just an in-and-out job, and you're the only one I trust. Do this for the channel, Rahat, and I'll make you senior correspondent next month. You'll be the youngest one in the channel's history."

"Just a small blast, sir?" Rahat asked, his voice barely a breath. "No one gets hurt?"

"Nobody," Mr Bagchi promised, patting Rahat's shoulder with warm, paternal authority. "Just enough noise to keep the national spotlight on us for another week."

The next few hours blurred together. By 11:15 PM on Tuesday night, Rahat found himself standing in the shadows outside the main gates of Atlantic University, clutching a heavy leather duffel bag Mr Bagchi had handed him in the parking lot. The night air was thick and silent. Just as promised, a security guard stepped out of the guard booth, nodded silently and unlatched the side gate. The man didn't say a word; he just gestured towards the central academic building.

Rahat slipped inside, his sneakers squeaking faintly on the polished marble floor of the lobby. The building was empty, swallowed by darkness. The CCTV cameras overhead showed no blinking red lights. Disabled, just like Mr Bagchi had said.

His hands trembled as he unzipped the duffel bag near the lift to arm the device. But as the zipper pulled back under the dim beam of his torch, Rahat froze.

There was no crude explosive inside.

Instead, the bag was stuffed with stacks of forged press credentials, three prepaid burner phones and a thick blue folder stamped with the emblem of a banned regional militant group. Nestled right in the centre was Rahat's own press badge, neatly pinned to a handwritten manifesto written in a scrawl that mimicked his own handwriting.

Before Rahat's brain could fully process what he was looking at, blinding white floodlights cut through the floor-to-ceiling glass doors of the lobby.

Sirens wailed, tearing through the quiet night. Heavy boots pounded against the concrete steps outside.

"Counter-Terrorism Unit! Hands where we can see them! On the ground now!"

Rahat dropped to his knees, his hands flying into the air, the torch tumbling from his grip. Through the glaring headlights outside, he saw the sleek black van of PrimeHub News parked right behind the police barricades. On top of the van, a high-definition camera rig was already elevated, its lens pointed straight through the glass doors, capturing his terrified face in crisp, broadcast-quality 4K.

Standing right behind the camera operator, illuminated by the red-and-blue strobe of police cruisers, was Subrata Bagchi. He wasn't cowering. He was calmly whispering into a lapel mic, giving a live, breathless play-by-play to millions of viewers tuning in across the country.

"We are bringing you live, exclusive footage from Atlantic University, where PrimeHub News has helped law enforcement foil a major terror plot," Bagchi's voice rang out through the broadcast speaker outside. "In a shocking turn of events, the suspect has been identified as a rogue field reporter operating within our own media ecosystem."

The police slammed Rahat onto the marble floor, cold steel cuffs snapping tightly around his wrists. As he was dragged towards the exit, his eyes locked with Mr Bagchi's across the glare of the searchlights. Bagchi didn't look angry or guilty. He gave Rahat a subtle, approving nod. Rahat had just bought the channel its ticket to the top.

There was never going to be an explosion. Subrata Bagchi didn't need a bomb to create the ultimate story. He just needed a villain.

By 2 PM on Wednesday, while Rahat sat in a windowless interrogation room struggling to convince detectives that he had been set up, PrimeHub News had hit an all-time high TRP rating. The live arrest of "The Terrorist Journalist" had shattered national viewership records.

**Hasib Ur Rashid Ifti** *is a part-time writer and a full-time teacher. Reach him at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com.*




ILLUSTRATION: **MAHMUDA EMDAD**



PHOTO: **MAISHA SYEDA**

POETRY

# Winter house

NUBISHA RABYA TOPOTE

The rain has stopped.
The calendar has gone barren,
each date picked clean
like a tree after winter.
I fixed the water filter myself.
There was something almost holy
about making water run again
with these hands that shook
all night from screaming.
My throat is still a little graveyard
of words I should not have said.
You left without your charger,
as if you meant to return it.
You took an umbrella,
but the weather betrayed you anyway.
Now it is freezing.
I cannot tell
if the cold is coming through the windows
or from the ghost of your breath
still sleeping against my neck.
Yesterday, the rain came down so hard
it sounded like the sky
was trying to break into the house.
I told you not to come back.
I meant it
in the way a dying woman means
she does not want the doctor
to turn the light on.
And yet—
if the doorbell rang tonight,
I know I would run.
Barefoot.
Before the second ring.
Before reason could put its hand
over my mouth.
I would open the door
and let you in
just to make another storm,
just to stand beneath its wreckage
and pretend, for a moment,
that warmth
was something you could still give me.

**Nubisha Rabya Topote** *is a poet currently working on her debut poetry collection. Find her at @nubishawrites.*



ILLUSTRATION: **MAHMUDA EMDAD**

POETRY

# going nowhere (fast)

ARWIN SHAMS SIDDIQUEE

a hundred fathoms
a hundred hundred light years
all roads lead nowhere
quickly. we make haste
from scratch, from flour and water and one egg,
one careful batch of hurry in an oven set to forever.
yet all roads lead nowhere
we are going nowhere, quickly
traversing oblivion at a million billion kilometers per second, ten times that,
a hundred times:
you are a point at the center of this universe
i am stood, arms outstretched on either side;
we are perfect strangers, parallel lines converging at infinity

**Arwin Shams Siddiquee** *is a former intern at Star Books & Literature.*

DHAKA SATURDAY NOVEMBER 7, 2026, KARTIK 22, 1433 BS

# SPORT



"It's not a retirement, his career hasn't ended. Anyone who knows him knows he still has goals for his career. The only thing I would hope for is that when the day finally comes for him to retire as a footballer, it happens differently than it did yesterday.

**JOSE MOURINHO** on Cristiano Ronaldo's international retirement

## Shadman 'not in a condition to bat'

**STAR SPORTS DESK**

Bangladesh will start the third day of the Sylhet Test effectively four wickets down after national team physio Bayjedul Islam Khan confirmed that opener Shadman Islam is "not in a condition to bat in the first innings" following an ankle injury.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board medical department confirmed the batter had sprained his left ankle on Friday morning, leaving the hosts a batter short.

"Shadman Islam hurt his ankle while fielding today and couldn't take any further part in the field afterwards," Bayjedul said in a video release. "We have kept him under observation and he has also undergone a scan. It looks like he has sustained an injury. We will get the scan report tomorrow [Saturday].... At this moment, he is not in a condition to bat in the first innings."

## WHAT TO WATCH

**T SPORTS**
Bangladesh vs West Indies
2nd Test, Day 3
Live from 9:30 am

LaLiga
Malaga VS Racing
Live from 7:00 pm
Espanyol vs Deportivo
Live from 9:15 pm
Osasuna VS Athletic
11:30 pm
Valencia vs Real Madrid
Live from 2:00 am (Sunday)

**SONY SPORTS 1, 2, 5**
U-19 Asia Cup
Afghanistan vs Malaysia
Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka
Live from 11:00 pm

**RAJDHANI TV, STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1**
English Premier League
Leeds vs Tottenham
Live from 6:30 pm
Arsenal vs Hull
Live from 9:00 pm
Nott'm vs Man City
Live from 11:30 pm



PHOTO: **FIROZ AHMED**

## Cerebral lock-picker Hasan keeps it simple

**ABDULLAH AL MEHDI** *from Sylhet*

Five five-fors, five countries, one nuanced reader of minds.

Hasan Mahmud's knack for setting up batters has gained new dimensions in recent times, and in the ongoing Sylhet Test, on a surface that was being prepared for a spin trio, the right-arm fast bowler of Bangladesh seized a world record. The length, the movement in the air or off the seam, all came together once more for him against the West Indies, as has been the case in the last six months.

Yesterday, the 27-year-old became the first-ever pacer in the Tests to bag five five-wicket hauls in five different conditions.

It was a rare feat which transcends conditions. Rawalpindi, Chennai, Darwin, Abu Dhabi and now Sylhet all carry their own challenges, and Hasan has thrived. Australia spinner Nathan Lyon was the first to achieve the feat, but in terms of pace, Hasan is the first.

At Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, where pacers were expected to play the supporting role, Hasan and Taskin Ahmed found water in the desert, with the former leading the charge and ending the second day with six scalps.

There is more to his skill than meets the eye. Beneath his shy exterior, Hasan has the knack for picking the lock. Far from just seam position or movement, part of his skill armoury, Hasan predicts batters' tendencies and how they are thinking.

"We try to bowl two-three balls in a way that the batsman might think how the ball will come [next]," he explained his tactical thinking at the press conference.

"We bowl like that, and the wicket-taking ball is bowled with a slightly different plan," he stated, suggesting that a ruse or deception is evidently at play. It was often clear. Kavem Hodge was castled shouldering arms on day one. The batter had left a delivery of similar length just two deliveries ago, but from that same length, Hasan hit the top of the stumps. Even set batter Amir Jangoo, batting on a ton, perished shouldering arms as Hasan made inroads on day two.

"Maybe the batsman thinks this [certain] ball won't come or a slightly fuller length ball will come, and he'll go to play it. Sometimes, the batsman might not think outside the box," Hasan said.

Jangoo was done in by the movement through the air, the ball tailing in and taking the off-stump. It was not the ball Jangoo expected, but Hasan predicted it. The results show.

Since June, Hasan has been among the top five pace wicket-takers in Tests, with 23 wickets. The top four in the list are all from outside the subcontinent. Hasan, meanwhile, bowled in Abu Dhabi, Mirpur and Sylhet during this period.

"I keep things very simple. But I will definitely try to get more in the future. As long as I am in Test cricket, playing, [picking up] five wickets will always be special. I will keep trying," Hasan said on his record.

Hasan almost got another hattrick yesterday after achieving the feat in the Abu Dhabi heat. With bounce on offer, his plans changed. Joshua Bishop was stumped, which saw Hasan become the first Bangladesh fast bowler to claim a stumping dismissal.

This was his first five-for at home, and as Hasan continues to make the complicated look simple, he seems to have found a formula that travels.

## BCB moves to introduce paid maternity leave

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to introduce paid maternity leave for women cricketers, with the proposal expected to receive formal approval soon, a board official said yesterday.

"We had an online board meeting yesterday [Thursday]. Many of the directors were present. We have decided to introduce paid maternity leave, and it will also be approved by the board," BCB women's wing chairman Rafiqul Islam Babu told The Daily Star.

On October 26, The Daily Star published a report in its print edition titled 'Here motherhood costs cricket career', highlighting how the absence of a maternity policy in Bangladesh cricket had left several women cricketers considering quitting the game.

Current and former women cricketers, umpires and coaches shared their experiences and expressed concern that, without such a policy, many players would continue to face uncertainty over whether motherhood and a sustained career could coexist.

"We discussed how many months of maternity leave could be granted and the payment details for those on the payroll," Rafiqul said.

"Some recommended four months, while we suggested six months Four months has been proposed for now, but it could be extended to six months," added the women's wing chairman.

Rafiqul further informed the board had already taken steps to pay former national pacer Suraiya Azmin four months' salary after she sought paid maternity leave earlier this year.

"I have already signed on it, and the payment should be credited to her account within a day or two for the four-month period," he added.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Suraiya said she had been informed of the development by Bulbul Bashar, who is in charge of the BCB women's wing.

Suraiya welcomed the move, saying: "I feel happier knowing that they are finally taking steps towards introducing paid maternity leave."

Cricket Australia and New Zealand Cricket provide paid maternity leave to their contracted players, while Pakistan introduced a Parental Support Policy in 2021.

On June 22 this year, International Cricket Council (ICC) introduced its Return to Play Post-Pregnancy Guidelines for women cricketers. Its six-stage framework -- Ready, Review, Restore, Recondition, Return and Refine -- covers recovery, medical assessments, gradual training and monitoring. While the guidelines help member boards develop their own policies, they do not guarantee paid maternity leave.

## 'Everything changed after the Bhutan win'

**Mohammad Ibrahim returned to the national team and made instant impact as a super-sub, scoring the decisive goal against Bhutan in the opening match of the SAFF Championship on Thursday. The 29-year-old forward, enjoying a rich vein of form with Fortis FC, spoke to The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman about his goal, time on the bench and away from the team, the improvements he has made to earn a recall, and the team environment. Following are the excerpts:**



**The Daily Star (DS): When you came on after 65 minutes with the match still goalless, what was going through your mind?**

**Mohammad Ibrahim (MI):** The coach told me to stay around the box and make third-man runs because we were struggling to score. Balls were coming into the box frequently from the right. By the grace of Allah, I scored, and it feels very good.

**DS: Describe the goal and the aftermath.**

**MI:** I was waiting for the second ball, anticipating where it might drop. When I saw the ball in the air after the header from Shamit [Shome], I was ready. Then I checked the goalkeeper's position before finishing. That moment cannot be expressed in words. Scoring in front of so many spectators on home soil is unbelievable. So many things go through your mind that you cannot remember everything.

**DS: What kind of hard work did you put in to return to the team after being dropped from the final squad for the ASEAN Cup?**

**MI:** Previously, we used to whip balls in from the flanks and then drop back to help the defenders. But recently, forwards have been scoring from inside the box as inverted wingers, something that was previously absent. After analysing this, I have been trying to score as an inverted winger and stay around the box. As a forward, I should be close to goal, either to score or assist. Physical fitness is also important for this.

**DS: What is your shortcoming? Why aren't you a regular in the team?**

**MI:** I scored my last goal in Malaysia during the Asian Cup Qualifiers four or five years ago. I don't know why I was dropped despite scoring two goals. I was performing regularly at club level but was still left out of the national team. When I was selected again, I had to spend time on the bench. But I always tried my best to return. Recently, the focus on overseas players has made the path tougher for those of us in the wing positions. However, I will not blame them [diaspora players], because we also needed to improve but failed to do so. Now all local players are working extra hard to address their shortcomings.

**DS: How do you assess Bangladesh's performance against Bhutan?**

**MI:** Our target was to score without conceding. Bhutan could not create chances, while we created many and were ahead in every aspect. It would have felt better if we had scored earlier.

**DS: Is it possible to become champions playing like this?**

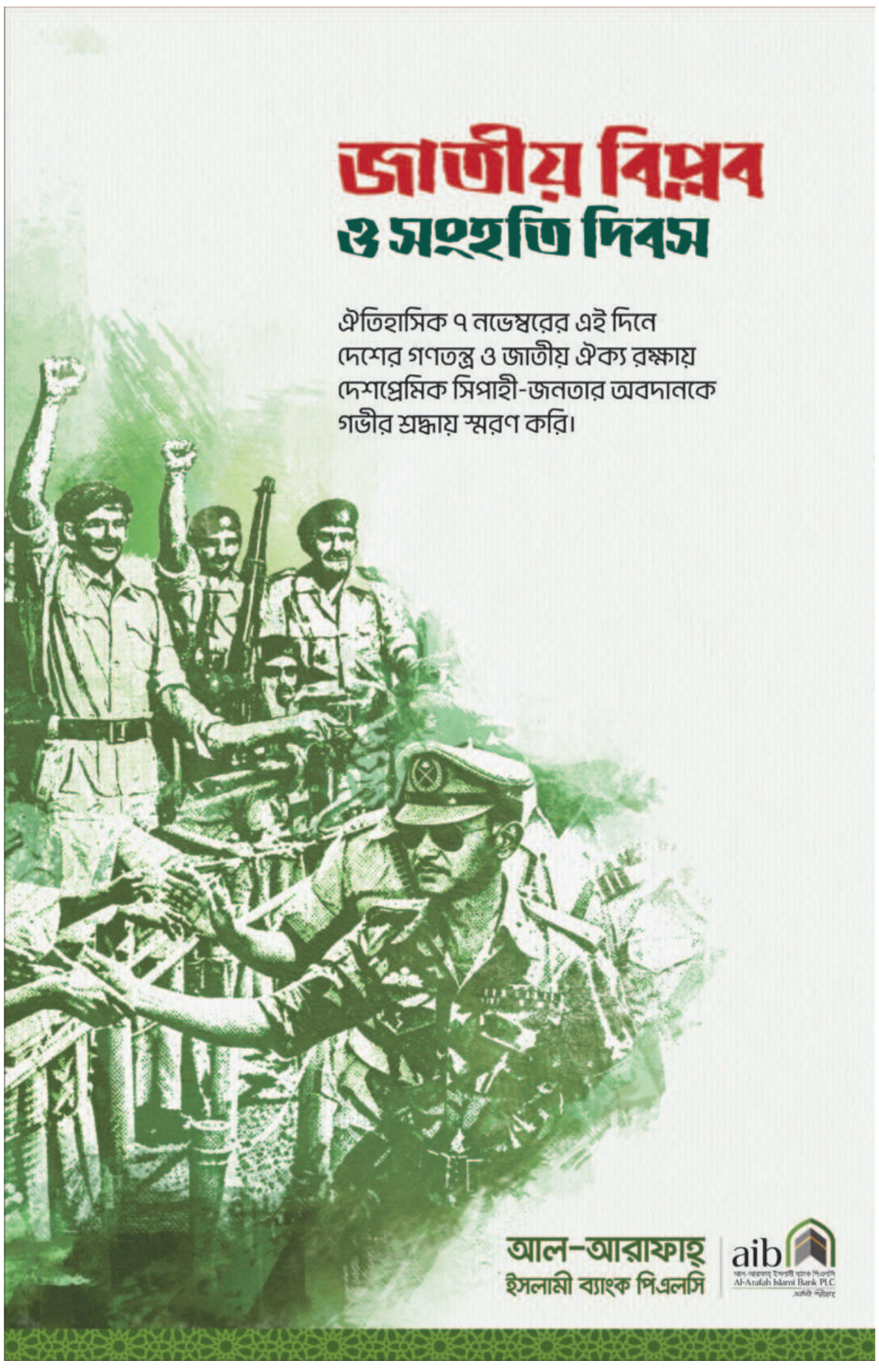
**MI:** We will definitely have to raise our level. When our main player Hamza [Choudhury] bhai joins the team, the scenario will be completely different. His presence gives everyone extra confidence. He also guides us on the pitch, and his impact drives everyone to give their best. We are not thinking about the title yet; we want to progress match by match.

**DS: Were you surprised to see Bishwanath Ghosh playing as a № 9, and how do you evaluate his performance?**

**MI:** It is the coach's decision, but I think Bishwanath did his job. He had to tire out the Bhutanese players, and he did that perfectly. He is hardworking and good in duels. The coach wanted him to wear down the opposition to make room for the substitutes to make an impact later, and that happened. If Bishwanath had scored, there would have been no discussion about his position.

**DS: How is the environment in the team after winning the opening match of the championship?**

**MI:** The atmosphere in the camp was gloomy and tense, especially after the 9-2 defeat to Indonesia in the ASEAN Cup. But everything changed after Thursday's win, and a positive vibe has returned. There is also the motivation of Hamza bhai and Farhaan Ali Waheed joining the camp before our second match against Sri Lanka. I think the atmosphere will improve further once Hamza bhai arrives.









## Trader shot in broad daylight in Cox's Bazar

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT,** *Cox's Bazar*

A furniture trader was shot in broad daylight yesterday in Cox's Bazar Sadar upazila after his car was stopped.

The victim, Mahmudul Haque, 45, was first taken to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital. He was then shifted to Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

The attack took place in front of Lal Golap Community Centre in Khurulia around 3:00pm, said Sheikh Mohammad Ali, officer-in-charge of Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station.

Police have seized a motorcycle in connection with the incident and are trying to arrest those involved, the OC said.

Talking to reporters at Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital, Mahmudul said he was travelling towards Ramu in his car when three motorcycles carrying six men blocked his vehicle in front of the community centre.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



**A worker spreads freshly dyed yarn over bamboo poles to dry in the open air in Madhabdi, Narsingdi. Once dry, the brightly coloured yarn will be used to make towels. The photo was taken recently.**

PHOTO: **MEHEDI HASAN**

## The low-value trap

### Why Bangladesh's RMG wages lag behind regional peers

**REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA**

Although Bangladesh has built a formidable presence in the global $1.2 billion textile and apparel market, its garment workers' wages remain significantly lower than those of regional competitors including China, Vietnam, India, Cambodia and Turkey.

For instance, the minimum wage for garment workers in China is $482; in Vietnam, $180-$250 (varying by regional minimum wage tier); in Indonesia, $145-$253 (decentralised regional rates); and in Cambodia, $192, according to data from the International Labour Organisation.

**ANALYSIS**

In India, the minimum wages vary from $90 to more than $200, and in Pakistan, it ranges from $92 to $128.

In contrast, Bangladesh's Tk 12,500 minimum wage, set in 2023, comes to $75 or $115 depending on the exchange rate used.

Garment factory owners blame the comparatively lower wages on the low unit price offered by global buyers for Bangladeshi apparel.

The unit price of the garment products shipped to the EU from Bangladesh is less than half of Vietnam's.

The average unit price of Bangladeshi garment items dropped 8.47 percent year-on-year to €13.80 per kilogram in the first half of 2026, according to Eurostat data.

During the period, Vietnam's average unit price rose

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

## Gazipur RMG belt calm after days of unrest

**OUR CORRESPONDENT,** *Gazipur*

The situation in Gazipur's industrial areas remained calm yesterday following several days of unrest in the garment sector, with police reporting no untoward incidents.

Although only 35 percent of garment factories were open yesterday, workers at those factories joined their workplaces peacefully, while others returned home after being given two days off.

Amjad Hossain, superintendent of Gazipur Industrial Police, told The Daily Star around 10:00am that the overall situation was normal.

Around 8:00am, workers were seen returning home in the Taragachh area along the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway.

A worker said his factory had announced a two-day closure. A worker at Ananta Garments in the same area also said her factory would remain closed for two days.

"We have been living in fear for the past few days. We have got two days off, so I am going home," said a worker at Matrix Sweater in Hajipukur.

Meanwhile, Parkstar Apparels and Parksin Bangladesh in Barabari and Gachha remained operational despite closures at nearby factories. Amjad said Saturday was a government holiday and a decision on whether factories would remain closed that day would be announced.

Inspector Tarikul Islam, stationed at Chandana Chourasta on Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway, said traffic was normal and no problems had been reported.

## Dengue threat unlikely to ease before December

### Experts call for targeted mosquito control measures



- Dengue cases may stay high through Nov
- 29 DSCC wards at high risk
- Most breeding sites near homes
- Lack of surveillance hampers dengue fight

**HELEMUL ALAM**

Dengue infections are likely to remain relatively high in November, with no significant decline expected until December, entomology experts have warned.

A recent survey by Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) identified 29 of its 75 wards as high-risk areas for Aedes mosquito breeding, while 28 were classified as moderately risky and 18 as low-risk.

The survey, conducted from September 27 to October 8, found Aedes mosquito larvae and pupae in 322 of the 2,250 houses inspected.

Of the identified breeding sites, 31.06 percent were in multi-storey buildings, 31.37 percent in independent houses, 17.39 percent in semi-permanent houses and 13.04 percent in buildings under construction.

Stagnant water on floors accounted for 12.26 percent of breeding sources, while plastic buckets accounted for 10.34 percent. Vacant plots were also identified as potential breeding grounds.

Prof Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University said dengue cases might decline slightly this month, but a significant reduction was more likely in December.

He said nearly 27 years of unsuccessful efforts to control dengue in Bangladesh showed the need for targeted, evidence-based mosquito control, particularly in residential areas.

The Insect Rearing and Experimental Station (IRES) of Jahangirnagar University, led by Bashar, conducts regular mosquito surveillance in Dhaka North City Corporation areas under an agreement between the two

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## Malaysia lists 51 medical centres for Bangladeshi workers

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Malaysia's Foreign Workers Centralised Management System (FWCMS) has published a list of 51 accredited medical centres in Bangladesh where prospective workers can undergo mandatory health examinations ahead of the resumption of recruitment after a suspension of more than two years.

A visit to the FWCMS website yesterday found the names and addresses of the facilities listed under its "Accredited Medical Centres" section.

According to FWCMS, the centres are registered with their respective local government authorities and have undergone audits conducted by Malaysian company Bestinet Sdn Bhd.

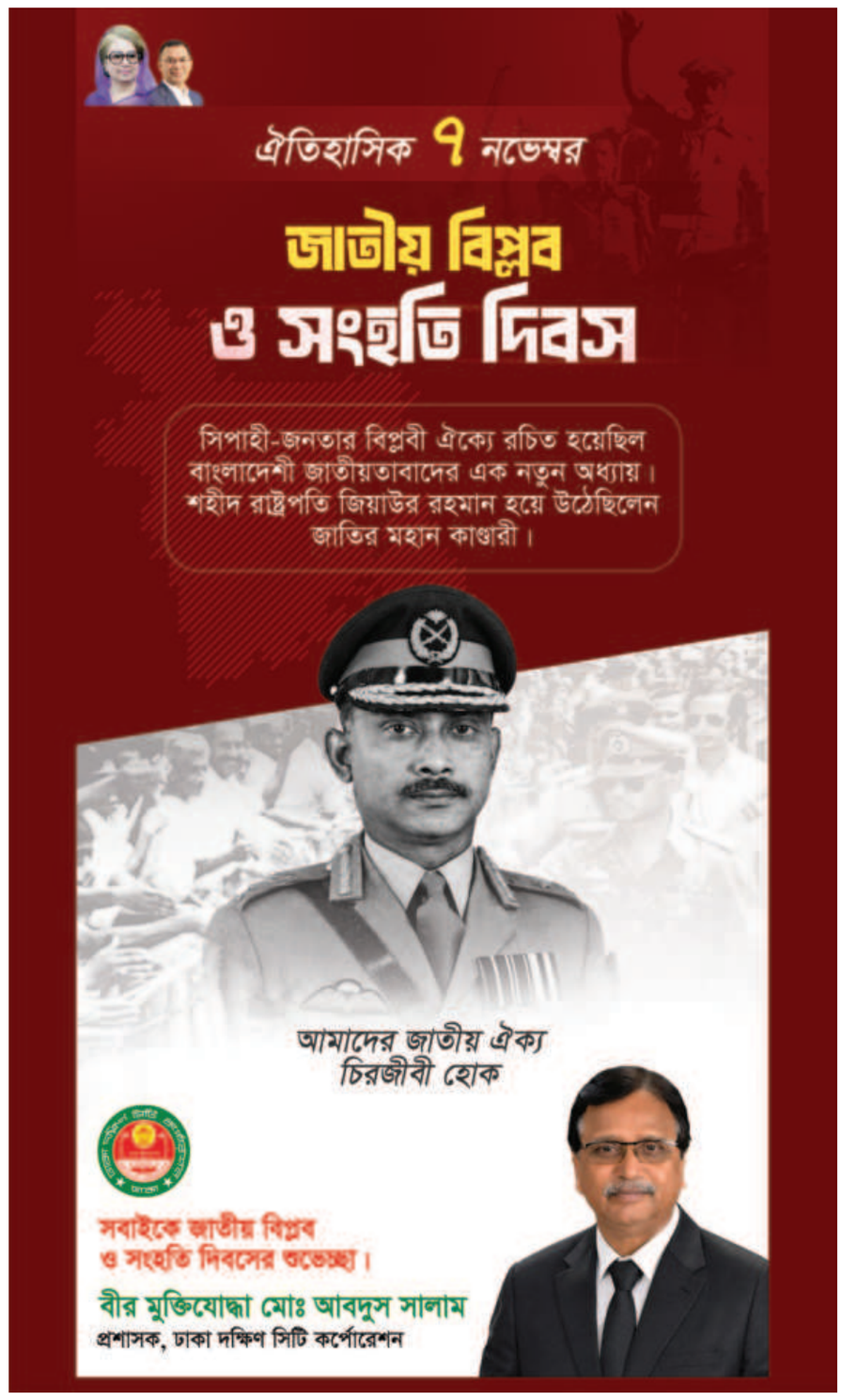
Medical examinations are mandatory before workers can apply for electronic Visa with Reference (eVDR).

The listed facilities include Asia Diagnostic & Medical Centre Ltd, Global Medicare Diagnostic Center Ltd, Universal Medical College & Hospital Ltd, Aichi Hospital Ltd, Lab Quest Ltd and Vita Health Medical Center.

Most are located in Dhaka, while Shahida Khatun Digital Medical Centre is listed in Gazipur.

The development comes amid demands from recruiting agencies for faster medical approvals and fewer procedural obstacles.

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WEEKEND READ

DHAKA SATURDAY NOVEMBER 7, 2026, KARTIK 22, 1433 BS

The Daily Star



# The sweet side of NARAYANGANJ

## From ghee laddus to chamcham, old confectioneries tell a sweeter story of the industrial city



◀ A variant of laddu

**SHAMIMA RITA**

Mention Narayanganj, and the conversation often turns to garment factories, historic Panam City and the fading glory of jute mills. Then come its familiar troubles: industrial and environmental pollution, urban sprawl and the Shitalakkhya gasping for breath.

Less often discussed is a sweeter part of its identity: the old confectioneries and the delicacies that have kept customers returning for generations.

Some of these businesses trace their beginnings back more than a century. Their heritage survives not simply in family recollections, but in kitchens where milk bubbles in cauldrons, chhana is kneaded by hand and ghee lends its aroma to freshly made laddus.

To find this Narayanganj, begin in Kalir Bazar.

At Adi Adarsha Mishtanna Bhandar,



Roshogolla

an enormous cauldron of milk sits over a blazing furnace. Nearby, fresh chhana is being prepared, kalojam is frying in a pan and steam rises from freshly made chamcham.

In a corner, a confectioner fries burinda, tiny pieces made from flour and sugar, in ghee. Once they cool slightly, another worker rubs ghee onto his palms and presses handfuls into round laddus. The roughly 400-square-foot kitchen is filled with the aroma of milk, chhana and ghee.

Other sweets are immersed in sugar syrup while another batch of ghee-fried laddus is prepared. A worker carries a tray of freshly made kachagolla towards customers waiting for their orders.



Special raisin-topped ghee laddus at Adi Adarsha Mishtanna Bhandar



Chhanar sandesh

During the Puja season, the selection includes a special raisin-topped laddu, praised by customer Mohammad Ikhtiar Uddin. Kachagolla and pera sandesh are favourites of Arun Biswas, whose family has bought sweets here for Lakshmi Puja for three generations.

Fourth-generation owner Moloy Kumar Modak traces the business to around 1870-72, when his great-grandfather began selling sweets near what is now № 2 Railgate. His grandfather, Madhusudan Modak, later established the shop permanently in Kalir Bazar, close to the railway station and river port.

Madhusudan brought ghee from Kolkata, used milk from the family's own cows and prepared sweets himself to maintain their distinctive taste, Moloy recalled.

Moloy now oversees the original establishment and another outlet at Santwana Market in Chashara, continuing the trade his father, Arun Kumar Modak, carried on until his death in 2016.

"When I hear that people travel from Chandpur, Dhaka, Savar and other distant places just to buy our sweets, I feel proud. I am trying to maintain the reputation my family has built," he said.

For Sharfuddin Sabuj, a customer for nearly 55 years, the sweets are recognisable even before the first bite.

"You can tell these sweets are from Adi Adarsha Mishtanna Bhandar just by the smell and taste," he said.

Sharfuddin remembers buying batasha and lal khoi during childhood market visits with his father. Some old favourites have since disappeared from the regular selection, but his family still buys sweets here for special occasions. A son living in Japan occasionally asks for kadma and jilapi, which Sharfuddin sends whenever possible.

About half a kilometre away, near № 1 Railgate, a short walk from Bose Cabin leads to Mistimukh, another longstanding name in the city's confectionery trade.

Founded around 130 years ago by Keshab Chandra Ghosh in Bottola, the shop became known for its doi and sweets. Keshab also practised homoeopathy, establishing the confectionery to preserve his family's tradition.



Pera Sandesh

The menu now offers both familiar flavours and plenty to explore. Roshogolla, chamcham, kalojam and kachagolla share space with shahi chamcham, pora chamcham, kheer chop, lyangcha, roshmonjuri and roshmalai.

For those drawn to date-palm jaggery, there are gurer roshogolla, gurer sandesh and gurer barfi.

Nearby, New Roshraj Mistimukh offers chhanar amriti, gajorer barfi, chocolate round and ilish peti. Its laddus range from ghee and moti to mawa, semai and kaju badam. Other sweets take the shapes of fish, butterflies and conch shells, named chhanar machh, chhanar projapoti and chhanar shankha.

The variety reflects a business that has adapted without leaving its older recipes behind.

Road expansion during HM Ershad's rule forced the family to move the original shop from across the road, near the railway line. Later, Keshab's son Trinath Ghosh established Roshraj Mistimukh in 2000.

At the older establishment, customers still gather around a narrow counter for familiar favourites.

"Our sweets are made from pure cow's milk, just as they were in my father's and grandfather's time," said Asim Ghosh, Mistimukh's fourth-generation owner.

"My father always told us that making sweets was our family's profession. We had to preserve the taste that customers expected, rather than think only about profit," he added.

Seating is limited at the old shop, although customers can sit at the newer outlet, cashier Alok Debnath said.

For tea seller Abdul Molla, the kalojam remains the attraction. "I have never found kalojam quite like theirs anywhere else," he said.

Newer creations have their admirers too. Debnath Basu, a customer since childhood, now brings his two-and-a-half-year-old granddaughter, Debasmita, for chocolate sweets.

Further along, in Ukilpara, a particular laddu has helped preserve its maker's name.

Jagatbondhu Mishtanna Bhandar is still known to many as Sonai Ghosh's sweet shop, after its founder, Sanatan Ghosh. Established around 1930, it began with paratha, vegetable bhaji and other breakfast items before expanding into confectionery.

The ghee laddus became known as Sonai Ghosh's laddus. Decades after his death, customers still seek them out, particularly during Chaitra Sankranti and Durga Puja.

Today, the selection extends to roshogolla, chamcham, kalojam, lalmohon, kheer chop, chhanar amriti, malai chop and different varieties of sandesh. Sweet doi and sour doi are also popular, while the shop has begun selling ghee made from cow's milk, said Haradhan Matabar, who has worked at the establishment for nearly half a century.

Keeping the counters supplied requires steady work. Chief confectioner Dipak Adhikari said around 20-25 maunds of chhana are prepared daily for making sweets.

"The sweets prepared at night are sold during the day. Orders for the following day are often placed the night before," he said.

"Some customers want ghee laddus, others ask for sandwich sweets or chocolate jam. But the older varieties are still more popular than the new ones."

Among those seeking the traditional sweets is Marufa Begum, who travels from Nimtoli in Old Dhaka for lalmohan and chamcham. After earlier visits left her without lalmohan, she called ahead and arrived around noon.

"I don't usually find sweets with this taste anywhere else. Whenever I really feel like eating sweets, I come here. I eat some and take more home," she said.

The family has opened a newer outlet with a wider selection, but the original shop still records higher sales, said owner Sukhdev Ghosh, Sanatan's son.

"Customers think the sweets at the old shop taste different, although we prepare them in the same kitchen," he said.

Preserving that taste is not without difficulty. Finding raw ingredients, especially pure milk, is a challenge, Sukhdev said.

"We are trying hard to maintain the same taste and keep prices affordable for customers from all walks of life," he said.

For Sukhdev, the standard remains the one set by his father. "My father's dream was to make sweets better than those sold elsewhere. We are trying to maintain that quality and keep the business going."

Back in the kitchen, Dipak continues kneading fresh chhana as fellow confectioners prepare ledikeni, malai chop, malai peshti, haribhanga and lyangcha. The aroma of ghee and fresh sweets drifts into the streets of Ukilpara.

These establishments have changed with Narayanganj. New outlets have opened, menus have grown and chocolate sweets have found a place beside traditional recipes. Yet their appeal still rests on flavours that customers return to, sometimes from far beyond the city.

Away from the familiar accounts of factories, pollution and urban pressures, this is another Narayanganj: a city whose heritage is also found in its sweet shops, and in what their confectioners make each day.



Lyangcha



Malai chop



Chhanar amriti at New Roshraj Mistimukh



Chamcham

PHOTOS: STAR

# How Dhaka can provide affordable housing

ISHRAT ISLAM, AFSANA HAQUE, JALAL AHMMED, SHAMMI AKTER SATU, SHAFIQUL HASAN SHAWON, MD. MUNTASIR MAMUN, MD. RAKIBUL HASAN HIMAL, KANIZ JAHAN, MD. ASHFAQ NAHIN CHOWDHURY MUGDHO, ADITYA CHOWDHURY

Housing is a fundamental human right and the foundation on which people can exercise and enjoy many other rights. Access to adequate housing, a dignified standard of living and livelihood opportunities is equally important for all citizens of Bangladesh, including those living in low-income settlements. The New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 make this a global commitment through the principle of 'leaving no one behind'. Despite these commitments, low-income residents across Bangladesh, particularly in Dhaka, continue to face inadequate housing, poor living conditions and limited access to basic services.

### THE HARSH REALITY OF LOW-INCOME SETTLEMENTS IN DHAKA

Although the policy framework has grown progressively broader, conditions in low-income settlements remain far from these aspirations. According to the Population and Housing Census 2022, Dhaka has the highest number of slum dwellers in the country. Of the 1.8 million (18 lakh) people living in slums across Bangladesh, 884,000 (8.84 lakh) reside in Dhaka. Dhaka also has the highest number of rootless or floating individuals, with 9,470 homeless people counted within the city limits. In low-income settlements, population density is around 1,012 people per acre, five times that of Dhaka city as a whole.

Approximately 78% of Dhaka's large slums are located in low-lying areas (Noshin & Faiaz, 2022). They are overcrowded. All family members, from the youngest to the oldest, live in a single room; five to eight members share a 150 sq ft room (Waliuzzaman, 2020). The dwelling units are made of tin sheets, bamboo and straw, which are not durable. Nevertheless, residents pay more rent per square foot than higher-income people in the city. In the Korail slum, rent accounts for around 68% of residents' income (Sinthia, 2020). In the Bhasantek slum, residents spend as much as 40% of their total household income on rent (Hussain et al., 2015). Eviction is another critical problem facing these low-income settlements. Without properly documented tenure rights, development project authorities often find it difficult to rehabilitate affected residents.

Poor and inaccessible water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities are another serious problem for residents. It takes 1.5 to 2 hours to collect water. Temporary toilets without any enclosed sanitation system and hanging toilets connected to drainage channels are common. Some toilets have no internal water supply. This puts people's privacy and safety, particularly those of teenage girls, at serious risk. Some 91% of households share toilets, with an average of 16 families sharing one toilet (Granada et al., 2018). People wait about seven minutes in a queue to use it.

Low-income residents bear a disproportionate burden of disasters and extreme weather events. During periods of heavy rainfall, many informal settlements become inundated. During scorching summers, inadequate housing conditions, overcrowding and limited access to cooling facilities make residents particularly vulnerable to heat stress (Azim, 2024). Fires are also frequent in these settlements and often cause devastating losses of life, homes and livelihoods. These natural and human-induced hazards intensify existing vulnerabilities and expose residents to multiple economic, social and environmental hardships.

### LOW-INCOME HOUSING AND NATIONAL COMMITMENTS

According to the United Nations definition, the human right to adequate housing means that housing must include seven core elements: security of tenure, availability of services, affordability, habitability, accessibility, location and cultural adequacy. Low-income settlements in Dhaka fall far short of these minimum requirements.

### NATIONAL HOUSING POLICIES

The first national housing policy for Bangladesh was approved in 1993. It recognised housing as a basic need, prioritised poor and low-income groups, encouraged participation by the private sector, NGOs and communities, and sought to control slums and unplanned development. The 2016 policy retains those principles and expands on them to address the much more complex housing environment created by urbanisation, population pressure, land scarcity, environmental concerns and rising construction and land costs.

The 1993 policy recognised the need for affordable and appropriately located land. The 2016 policy introduces more specific mechanisms, including land banks and the use of unused or khas land, to increase the supply of land for housing and reduce housing costs. It places greater emphasis on the incremental upgrading and rehabilitation of informal settlements than on simply eliminating them. It also calls for more explicit use of soft loans, housing funds, public–private partnerships (PPPs), and savings and investment mechanisms.

### FIVE-YEAR PLANS

Bangladesh's Five-Year Plans (FYPs) show how the country's approach to housing the poor and middle class has shifted over time. Initially, the government tried to build complete houses for people. Later, it changed its approach and began providing plots of land with basic services or constructing multi-storey blocks of flats.

The First Five-Year Plan (1973–1978) stressed the importance of cooperative housing, a shelter programme for the urban poor and lower-middle-income groups. It also proposed planned temporary shelters for the poor. However, these plans were implemented only to a limited extent. In January 1975, the government launched a sudden, large-scale squatter clearance operation and forcibly displaced the urban poor who had migrated to the city. They were either compelled to return to their villages of origin or relocated to makeshift camps in Dattapara, Tongi, Chanpara in Demra and Bhasantek. The operation attracted widespread criticism and demonstrated that forced eviction is neither a sustainable nor an effective solution to urban poverty and informal settlements. Such measures leave the underlying housing crisis unaddressed, deepen social and economic insecurity and generate further socio-political unrest.

The Second Five-Year Plan (1980–1985) also prioritised low-income housing, but the implementation of housing projects was limited. The Fourth (1991–1995) and Fifth (1997–2002) Five-Year Plans focused heavily on "sites and services" schemes. Instead of complete houses, the government provided plots, roads and utility lines. Unfortunately, wealthier groups and government officials often ended up acquiring these plots. The National Housing Authority (NHA) was established during this period with a mandate to meet the housing needs of low- and middle-income groups.

The Sixth (2011–2015) and Seventh (2016–2020) Five-Year Plans recognised that cities were growing rapidly. The plans shifted towards multi-storey flats and high-rise apartments to make optimum use of land in densely populated cities such as Dhaka. The Sixth FYP proposed low-cost, multi-storey buildings for slum dwellers and sites-and-services schemes for low- and middle-income groups.

The National Housing Policy was approved during the Seventh FYP (2016–2020). It aimed to coordinate fragmented housing initiatives. This plan emphasised improving access to land and housing and proposed establishing a special zone for the urban poor. It also introduced the concept of in-situ upgrading or improvement of slums. Furthermore, it proposed low-income housing loans and rental housing.

The Eighth Five-Year Plan (2020–2025) again expressed a commitment to addressing the housing needs of the poor and mentioned the Social Housing Project, slum improvement, the development of rental housing for low-income groups and collective tenure security. The Eighth FYP also called for a special quota for poor people and people with disabilities in publicly developed housing projects.

Despite these commitments over the past five decades, very little has been done to address the housing needs of disadvantaged sections of society. The private sector has largely been indifferent to the housing needs of the urban poor, as most private housing initiatives are driven by market demand and cater to middle- and upper-income groups. Regrettably, although urban development authorities in Bangladesh have undertaken several large-scale housing projects in Dhaka and other cities, little tangible progress has been made in providing adequate and affordable housing for the urban poor.

According to the Sustainable Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report 2025, "Bangladesh has experienced unplanned urbanisation, with over 31.5% of the population now living in cities, and more than half of them residing in urban slums. Although there has been very little progress, the percentage of urban residents living in slums has dropped from 54% in 2014 to 51.5% in 2022, falling well short of the 20% target by 2030."

### LOW-INCOME HOUSING IN DHAKA'S DETAILED AREA PLAN (2022–2035)

For the first time, in the Detailed Area Plan (DAP) 2022–2035, RAJUK has proposed 58 locations for affordable housing, particularly for low- and lower-middle-income people. Figure 1 shows these locations. Of these sites, 53 are within RAJUK's jurisdiction, covering around 1,011.2 acres of land (Table 1), while five lie within the Gazipur City Corporation area. RAJUK and the National Housing Authority, in coordination with other agencies, could take the initiative to implement this DAP proposal.

Addressing the unfinished agenda of affordable housing for low-income people

Internationally, the signatories to the SDGs, including Bangladesh, are committed to ensuring access to adequate housing for all. At the national level, low-income housing is addressed in the country's successive Five-Year Plans and national housing policies.

Within these policy frameworks, the NHA is mandated to provide housing for low- and middle-income groups, and the DAP 2022–2035 has, for the first time, spatially acknowledged this need by earmarking dedicated locations for affordable housing in the Dhaka metropolitan area. Among the barriers to realising these commitments on the ground, land tenure and ownership stand out. Land ownership is central to housing provision because land is the fixed asset that determines housing availability, cost and security.

Against this backdrop, while working on the Housing and Land Use chapter of thedocumentÒevm‡hvM¨XvKvgnvbMixiRb¨Kg©cwiKíbvÓ,ourteamdecidedtofocuson housing for low-income people in Dhaka. To understand the views of various stakeholders and develop a proposal for low-income housing, we organised a workshop in collaboration with RAJUK on 18 February 2025. Given the problems related to land ownership, a vacant plot in the Uttara Third Phase area was selected as the study site from among the 53 locations proposed in the DAP (2022–2035). The 9.04-acre site, commonly known as Uludaha playground, is located in Ward № 52 of Dhaka North City Corporation. Workshop participants of the workshop considered the site highly promising, as the land is government-owned and readily available, and there is demand for low-income housing. The workshop also reached a consensus on the following points:

• A collective or public ownership model is safer and more equitable than individual ownership. Allocating government (khas) land for long-term use was preferred.

• A mixed-ownership model was proposed in which 25% of dwelling units would be rental-based and 75% would be allocated under the "Rent-to-Ownership Model". Under this approach, residents would initially occupy housing units as tenants and, after completing a predetermined rental period and meeting agreed payment conditions, would have ownership transferred to them. The importance of joint husband-and-wife ownership, non-transferable titles and income-based allocation was also discussed.

• Emphasis was placed on a multidimensional financing framework involving the government, the private sector, international development organisations and the community. Bangladesh Bank, PKSF, the World Bank, ADB, UNDP, CSR funds and community savings systems were identified as potential sources of financing.

• The proposed dwelling unit sizes range from 250 sq ft to 600 sq ft, with an emphasis on a cluster model that includes common amenities and ensures public participation.

• A needs assessment, community participation, the formulation of a model plan, local capacity building, workshops and learning from successful examples (such as Thailand's CODI or Jhenaidah's POCAA model) were proposed.

Below is a list of short-, medium- and long-term proposals to meet the housing needs of low-income people, based on discussions at the consultation workshop and a review of global practices.

### THE PROPOSAL

*Short term (within three years)*

• Of the 53 sites within RAJUK's jurisdiction identified in the DAP, prioritise those that are government-owned, located close to existing settlements and relatively large for low-income housing projects in Dhaka.

• Formulate specific legislation and effective policies to ensure the transparent and equitable implementation of affordable housing programmes and the fair allocation of housing units among the target population.

• Establish a specialised "Affordable Housing Cell" under the National Housing Authority (NHA).

• The cell should comprise representatives from the National Housing Authority, RAJUK, the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, and Dhaka North and South City Corporations to ensure effective coordination among the relevant agencies.

• The cell should conduct research on the housing needs, affordability and living conditions of low-income communities and involve universities and research institutions in the process.

• Given the high demand for rental housing, establish a dedicated unit within the cell to oversee rent determination, housing allocation and overall management.

• Establish an initial fund under Bangladesh Bank to support project implementation.

• Develop an effective public–private partnership (PPP) model for implementing affordable housing projects. Under this model, the government would provide land and subsidies, while private developers would undertake construction. Developers would recover their investments by selling a designated proportion of the completed housing units at market prices.

• Take initiatives to secure low-interest financial assistance from foreign development partners to support project implementation.

### MEDIUM TERM (THREE TO SIX YEARS)

• Formally designate affordable housing as a priority government programme.

• Incorporate affordable housing into the country's Five-Year Plans and adopt corresponding budgetary and policy measures.

• Identify abandoned, unused khas and other vacant government land under the Ministry of Land and bring it under affordable housing programmes.

• Provide affordable and decent housing for workers employed in industrial areas, particularly in economic zones across the country.

• Provide government incentives and policy support to encourage and engage industry owners in providing affordable housing for their workers.

• Establish a mechanism and policy framework under the Bangladesh House Building Finance Corporation (BHBFC) to provide low-income families with access to housing loans on affordable and flexible terms.

• Introduce long-term, low-interest loans with repayment periods of 25–30 years.

• Facilitate the provision of housing loans ranging from BDT 200,000 to BDT 500,000 at low interest rates through microfinance institutions (MFIs) to support low-income households.

### LONG TERM (SIX TO TEN YEARS)

• Ensure the effective implementation of affordable housing projects beyond Dhaka by gradually extending them to divisional and district towns across the country.

• Establish and manage a Joint Maintenance Fund to ensure the sustainable maintenance of completed housing complexes, with participation from RAJUK, city corporations and residents' welfare associations.

• Promote local businesses and generate employment opportunities by developing mixed-use commercial spaces within project areas.

• Integrate affordable housing projects with the city's major transport networks and other essential urban services and facilities.

• Conduct regular research to assess changing patterns in the incomes, living standards and housing needs of low-income communities.

• Update the planning, design and financing models of future housing projects based on research findings.

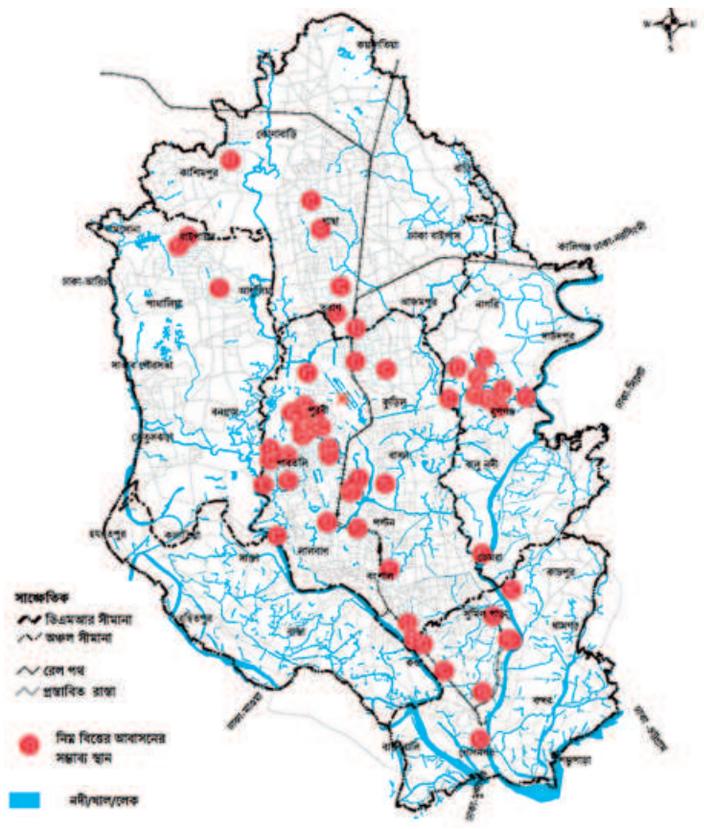
All development efforts are called into question when a significant proportion of the population struggles to find a decent place to live in comfort, dignity and security. The government must translate its commitment to affordable housing into concrete action through sustained investment, innovative financing, stronger institutional coordination and inclusive housing policies that prioritise low-income communities. However, limited public resources, rising land prices, institutional weaknesses and the growing gap between housing costs and household incomes remain formidable obstacles. Overcoming them requires political commitment, new partnerships and a shared vision of inclusive urban development.

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**Note:** In 2024, RAJUK took the initiative to prepare an Action Plan for Dhaka titled Òevm‡hvM¨XvKvgnvbMixiRb¨Kg©cwiKíbvÓ (available at https://rajuk.gov.bd). The authors of this article worked on the Housing and Land Use chapter of this document. This article is a summarised and modified version of the material presented in that chapter.



An aerial view of Korail slum shows densely packed tin-roofed houses surrounded by water, with Dhaka's high-rise buildings in the distance. PHOTO: STAR




Proposed locations for low- and lower-middle-income housing in Dhaka.
SOURCE: DETAILED AREA PLAN FOR DHAKA (2022–2035)

**Distribution of affordable housing locations proposed in the DAP for low- and lower-middle-income groups, by ownership and area**

| Current ownership of the designated sites | No. of Sites | Area (Acre) |
|---|---|---|
| RAJUK | 12 | 121.56 |
| Government land | 5 | 136.64 |
| NHA & mostly private | 8 | 53.77 |
| DNCC | 5 | 29.49 |
| PWD & T&T | 1 | 58.84 |
| Dhaka WASA | 1 | 73.33 |
| Privately owned land | 6 | 269.35 |
| Ownership data not available | 15 | 268.22 |
| **Total** | **53** | **1,011.2** |

SOURCE: DETAILED AREA PLAN FOR DHAKA (2022–2035) AND RAJUK (2025).



Bangladesh Railway officials demolish more than 50 makeshift houses along the railway tracks in Karwan Bazar during an eviction drive in January 2025. Forced eviction is neither a sustainable nor an effective solution to urban poverty and informal settlements. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Bangladesh's parliament building in Dhaka. The challenge facing the new government extends beyond a change in political leadership to dismantling deeply entrenched networks of patronage, dependency and informal power that shape relations between the state and society.
PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

THE ANATOMY OF A FAUSTIAN SOCIETY

# Can Bangladesh break free from the politics of dependency?

**GEOF WOOD**

Twenty-three years ago, I published an article in the journal World Development (2003), titled 'Staying Poor, Staying Secure: The Faustian Bargain'. It advanced the argument that poor people can be distinguished, inter alia, from well-off classes by their need to trade autonomy for security, at the cost of remaining poor. At that time, I was focused on how the rural poor were locked into personalised dependency within patron-clientelist communities, and how their poverty was therefore socially reproduced, with opportunities to break out denied. My proposition now asks whether this micro-level context can be expanded to characterise an entire society, where poverty and livelihood insecurity for the majority, even as the economy has advanced, induce a large-scale sacrifice of freedom of agency through an acceptance of client dependency, thereby reinforcing clientelist politics at all levels and in all activities, extending to the behaviour of political parties when in power. An analysis of labour markets and agrarian transitions, summarised below, would suggest that such an expansion of the concept is justified as a description of the macro picture: hence, a Faustian society.

After two decades of change, especially in societies like Bangladesh, does this argument still hold? Two questions can be asked: does that element of distinction between poor and comfortable classes still apply; and can any part of the argument be applied on a wider scale, to the extent that we can talk about Faustian societies?

**Will ordinary people's livelihoods continue to rely on pervasive patron-clientelism, personalised networks and segmented labour markets that operate outside both open competition and full-scale commoditisation, offering, at best, dependent security?**

We should immediately observe that many societies around the world are going into reverse by measures of rights, democracy and personal autonomy, driven largely by right-wing, neo-fascist agendas in which acceptance of political suppression is the price offered for survival. Consider the politics of the contemporary USA, Germany, France, Sweden, the Netherlands, Italy and right-wing opposition parties in the UK, for example, or the ongoing examples of China, Russia, North Korea and Argentina, but now not Brazil and Serbia (after the 25 October elections)! So, let us dismiss instantly the idea of a natural societal progression towards individual autonomy within a framework of advancing democracy. The evidence is too thin. Rather, the idea of the Faustian society has considerable resonance in modern times. The late 20th- and early 21st-century 'enlightenment' looks increasingly like a temporary blip in world history.

These threats to everyone's liberty, rich and poor alike, occur amid evidence of rising inequalities worldwide. This rise can be attributed to the global oligopolistic concentration of capital, and thus of power. The expansion of AI, alongside the ability of finance capital to suck up other people's savings (Yanis Varoufakis, Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism, 2023), has reinforced this process. If we take the underconsumption thesis seriously (Rosa Luxemburg, Accumulation of Capital, 1913), then capitalism itself is marching towards self-destruction in the absence of contemporary imperialist offsets. These conditions have always favoured millenarian politics rather than inclusive and collective solutions: our present global danger.

How far does this arc of global history apply to Bangladesh and its neighbours with a shared colonial history? As Bangladesh transitions from a pre-capitalist agrarian past, with the rapid expansion of urbanised gangster capitalism, what kind of growth can it contemplate? Inclusive or exclusionary? Can any government deliver welfare to its people when it is likely to encounter the jobless growth conundrum (Santosh Mehrotra, India's Economic Paradox: Growth Without Jobs, lecture, May 2025)? How can the prospect of a large reserve army of labour, comprising those detached from the growing parts of the economy, be addressed?

This is the context for considering the 'Faustian society' proposition. Will ordinary people's livelihoods continue to rely on pervasive patron-clientelism, personalised networks and segmented labour markets that operate outside both open competition and full-scale commoditisation, offering, at best, dependent security?

The answer is unlikely to be all or nothing. Consider, first, overseas employment opportunities in labour-intensive, at best partially skilled, sectors (e.g. construction). These continue to be sources of remittances that are converted into domestic opportunities for poor, less-educated families. But access remains characterised by informal recruitment networks and debt bondage of some kind. Such opportunities may be seen as part of globalisation but are far from commoditised: Faustian rather than evidence of an 'open' society. Of course, well-off classes with wealth derived from rents and corruption have enjoyed privileged access to international education and careers for their children, with subsequent recruitment into employment still occurring through family and patron connections.

Turning, , to domestic employment, what is the evidence of merit-based, open recruitment, again adjusting for middle-class connections? The economy of Bangladesh has undoubtedly evolved, as witnessed by its recent period of rapid urbanisation and the expansion of digitisation and services. Expanding industrial sectors (garments being an obvious leader) require a growing managerial class, as well as upskilled labour, with the national composition of that labour shifting away from workers from India, China and Korea towards Bangladeshis, again recruited largely through informal gatekeepers. Simultaneously, urbanisation entails significant growth in services and the informal sector, where networks and segmented market conditions apply. Our understanding of 'syndicates' (David Jackman, Syndicates and Societies, 2024) reveals rival gangs and mastaans, protected by politicians, controlling spaces and territories and the opportunities within them. It is difficult to believe that these ways in which the political economy operates can be changed in the short term by any government. Where are the incentives to do so? Rent-seeking, whether through the manipulation of state resources or through private-sector quasi-monopolies, pervades the mode of politics, both in the quest for power and in its exercise. In such a system, no man can be an island within the myth of 'equality of opportunity'.

Third, agrarian relations continue to undergo significant transformation (e.g. Wood and Mandal, Agrarian Futures in Bangladesh: The Political Economy of Peasant Transformation, 2025) as capital further intrudes into traditional relationships and modes of land use. This includes changing patterns of clientelism. The era of landlords presiding over dependent small subsistence peasant families and sharecroppers, characterised by extortionate rents, moneylending and tied, bonded labour, has passed. But the aftermath has not produced a sustainable class of petty commodity producers with net marketable surpluses sustaining urban populations. The Bangladeshi 'nation of small farmers' is rapidly disappearing. Increasingly, the rural scene can be illustrated by the observation: 'My land produces rice, but I buy my rice in a packet.' Landowners and tenants are leasing out their fragmented plots to contractors who manage the land throughout the production cycle, from land preparation, transplanting, irrigation and crop management to harvesting and processing. This proliferation of agricultural actors reflects the intrusion of capital in various forms and a redistribution of returns through different forms of corporate behaviour. But this disarticulation of the family farm as a self-contained social unit of production has not been replaced by an open, competitive process of commoditisation. Rather, it is characterised by new forms of patron-clientelism, with the erstwhile peasantry becoming rentiers and price takers in new forms of contracting and market chains. Access to agricultural labour and off-farm opportunities in this new rurbanised economy occurs, for most people, through gatekeepers or sardars of some sort. Research on syndicates shows that this new political economy relies on political patronage at upazila, district and national levels, where politicised control is exercised over the interface between publicly funded projects and private contracting. The rurbanisation of Bangladesh's delta space does not imply that open, commoditised transactions simply replace relationships of personalised dependency. Roberts captured this phenomenon in Latin America in 1978 with the title Cities of Peasants.

There are, of course, other aspects of Bangladesh's increasingly unequal political economy and its continuing reliance on informal networks and patrons. At best, the country might be a Pareto-optimising one, with the possibility of raising living standards for all, but at varying rates for different classes, though this is a process likely to be further undermined when the prospects for young people are considered. Rather, it remains an elitist society, albeit one that has to accommodate new entrants, representing new forms of income and wealth, into wider coalitions of meaningful participation and citizenship. If this process of accommodating the nouveau riche implied more open modes of access to livelihood opportunities and security, then the Faustian society proposition would not hold.

According to North, Wallis and Weingast in Violence and Social Orders (2009), this process of accommodation would entail a shift from violence and coercion (or meaningful threats thereof) towards more codified, legally based universalism, in which political and social rights steadily advance, with a corresponding strengthening of democratic and 'open access' conditions. But North et al. also remind us that this linear progression towards inclusive, rights-based development cannot be assumed. Given the fragile and contradictory state of contemporary Bangladesh, with a pessimistic prognosis for many indicators, a shift towards codification would threaten the short- and medium-term interests of present elites, who are the economic beneficiaries of opaque state and market practices involving favours in return for rents extracted by those holding power within political, bureaucratic, legal, banking, educational, business and military institutions.

In summary, the normative idea of a state that works for everyone in the population is weak in Bangladesh, as is, therefore, the notion of universal, equally meaningful citizenship. Meanwhile, society, with its inherited and continuing deep structures, remains strong, adapting to change without relinquishing elite control, which is maintained through a complex hierarchy of informal roles embedded in its past (see Joel Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World, 1988). These conditions open us up to the idea of a Faustian society, which, of course, is not unique to Bangladesh but is present, I would argue, across the subcontinent and beyond, including in the fragile, post-industrial economies noted above.

So how is a Faustian society to be understood in terms of state-society relations, and what indicators of significant changes in practices should we look out for? And can we realistically expect the present elected government to escape this embeddedness? In a short article like this, is it possible to provide detailed evidence for the truth of my core proposition? Not really. But I invite readers, in all conscience, to consider everyday life around them through the lens I have offered here, and to conduct their own verification exercise, their own triangulation.

As a reminder to readers, it seems clear that previous post-liberation regimes in Bangladesh have seen ruling parties and the military unable to dissociate or detach the state from Faustian societal practices. Rather, we have witnessed a blurring (permeability) of the fictional boundary between state and society, between public and private spheres, a process of mutual co-option: governments seek loyalty and compliance across the institutional landscape to exercise state power; elites seek to harness those elements of state power that can facilitate their private interests.

This mutuality has involved the use of state power (a combination of violence and bureaucratic pseudo-legal entanglement) to subvert the independence and permanence of the media, journalism, student associations, the justice system, academic research and teaching, the framing of history in schools, the civil bureaucracy and the police. This has entailed interference with open, meritocratic recruitment and the redeployment of public officials (reward and punishment), alongside the allocation of pension entitlements through the establishment of favourable quota criteria; allowing national banks to tolerate loan delinquency, enabling rent-seeking by favoured indebted borrowers; allocating valuable plots of land for construction to favoured client groups to secure their loyalty; presiding over the marketisation of state services, accepting pay-offs for tax avoidance and evasion, and turning a blind eye to capital flight overseas; and turning attempts at codification and regulation into opportunities for gatekeeper rent-seeking rather than ensuring probity and fairness in competition.

All of the above confirm a process of locking state officials and much of the population into continuing personalised and informal dependency. A further outcome has been historically low levels of tax revenue as a proportion of GDP (7%) compared with other countries at similar stages of development (13%), thereby undermining the provision of general public services or necessitating further public debt to maintain them: another negative trade-off.

At the same time, if the analysis of syndicate behaviour is accepted, then economic transactions throughout society, especially those involving public investment, including major infrastructure projects, have entailed kickbacks to officials holding power. Transparency International Bangladesh has exposed much of this, including the siphoning of rents into overseas and offshore havens. In all these instances, many thousands of economic and political actors are involved in informal, non-transparent deals and agreements, aided by interlocking forms of coercion, whether manifest or latent. New entrants, whether public officials or private-sector employees, are quickly inducted by their superiors, with compliance ensured by the threat of exposure. That becomes the established way to get ahead in both arenas. What all this means is that it is not only the poor who have to accept client status and forgo subsequent freedoms to access low-level opportunities and employment; those 'above them' in the hierarchy of the political economy are also incorporated into Faustian behaviour.

So what would a counterfactual look like? Can the incoming regime, this new government, led by a political party whose own origins lie within the post-colonial culture described above, manage to dissociate itself from this past and reverse many of these behaviours, which have been so extensively practised by its predecessors? It is not so easy to detach oneself from deep structures, precisely because they are so deeply embedded. And let us be clear: many societies around the world, including those regarded as democratic and open-access societies by rating agencies, share many of these inherited problems. My own country is included: just look at the scandals arising from the Johnson administration during the Covid era. But more deeply, we have a caste system too, which straddles and structures the intimate relationship between public- and private-sector behaviour.

Meanwhile, until this break from the past occurs, it would seem prima facie valid to describe these conditions as those of 'Faustian societies'.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

**Street vendors sell clothing and other goods from makeshift stalls along a crowded road in Gulistan, Dhaka. Access to trading spaces and economic opportunities is often controlled by informal networks, including local powerbrokers and politically protected groups, reinforcing relationships of dependency and patronage.**



**Aspiring migrant workers queue with their luggage, wearing BMET Bangladesh T-shirts. Overseas employment opportunities remain shaped by informal recruitment networks, intermediaries and debt obligations, even as remittances provide economic opportunities for poorer households in Bangladesh.**
PHOTO: STAR

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PHOTOS: **S DILIP ROY, SHAIFUDDIN KHALED**

# ECONOMICS OF TOBACCO

# Quick profits and unseen costs

## A crop that pays farmers, sellers, and the treasury. What it costs the country is much more, but the damage takes time to see

**MD ASADUZ ZAMAN**

From farmers who grow it to consumers who use it, tobacco's harm is widely acknowledged. It damages nearly every organ, causing cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung disease, reduced fertility, weakened immunity and premature death.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), tobacco kills around 8 million people worldwide every year, including about 200,000 in Bangladesh. The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids estimates it will claim 1 billion lives this century, making it one of the world's biggest public health threats.

Its cultivation also damages land, water and air. Yet farming and consumption continue, largely because stakeholders across the supply chain see tobacco as a moneymaker.

"We understand that there is harm," one farmer in northern Bangladesh, a major tobacco-growing region, said. "But compared with our other crops, the profit is much higher."

Manufacturers also admit the harm but argue that tobacco taxes provide predictable government revenue because demand is highly inelastic.

The government earns more than Tk 40,000 crore a year from tobacco taxes, even as it raises them to discourage consumption. State institutions also hold partial stakes in the country's largest tobacco company, British American Tobacco Bangladesh (BAT).

What often goes unheard is the long-term economic damage borne by the state and people. Healthcare spending and environmental damage cost over Tk 87,500 crore in 2024, according to the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University and the Economics for Health programme at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

### MONEYMAKER: 'NEVER A LOSS'

Drive through northern Bangladesh and patches of tobacco seedbeds are already visible ahead of the next growing season. Farmers will begin harvesting leaves in February.

In Kholeya union of Rangpur Sadar, Nikhil Chandra Sarkar farms about six bighas, growing potatoes, rice and tobacco. He received a tobacco card from BAT in 2024.

"The company gives seeds, loans and fertiliser. They give everything needed for cultivation," he said. The support covers roughly half his costs. "The benefit of the card is that they will take the tobacco. They are obliged to take it."

Last year, he spent around Tk 20,000 cultivating potatoes on one bigha and Tk 15,000 to Tk 16,000 on tobacco on another. He earned about Tk 16,000 from potatoes and Tk 60,000 from tobacco.

His family does most of the farm work, keeping costs down. Those hiring labour can spend Tk 30,000 to Tk 35,000 per bigha, he said.

"If we don't grow tobacco, we have to grow potatoes or wheat. But we cannot do everything ourselves with those crops. Hiring labourers cuts into the profit."

A Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI) study of five major crops found tobacco offered the highest return per decimal, 18.6 percent above rice and 33 percent above jute. Half the surveyed farmers grew it because their neighbours did, while around 43 percent cited the assurance of a buyer.

Saiful Islam, a farmer in Lalmonirhat, said tobacco prices fell from around Tk 7,000 a maund last year to Tk 4,000 this year. He continues growing it because nearly every part of the plant can be sold, including leaves rejected for better-quality tobacco. "There has never been a loss in this cultivation."

Leaves are harvested in stages, with buyers often paying for each batch. "Suppose you get money in three stages. Leaf by leaf," said Nur Mohammad of Lalmonirhat.

### THE 'TRAP' THAT KEEPS FARMERS COMING BACK

The assurance of a buyer is central to tobacco's appeal, according to Md Saiful Alam, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Rangpur.

"Paddy or mustard prices fluctuate. Sometimes field-level prices are low, sometimes high. But tobacco companies have a system of buying the crop and paying farmers in full. That certainty makes farmers inclined to grow it, even if the profit is lower," he said.

Rumana Huque, an economics professor at Dhaka University, said farmers' financial constraints pushed them to prioritise short-term gains.

"Farmers do not really have the opportunity to think about the long term because their main priority is to consolidate their present situation," she said.

Company advances can deepen that dependence. "If they take an advance, they fall into a cycle. To get out, they have to repay the tobacco company. Under the contract, they become bound by an obligation," she added.

Speaking ahead of World No Tobacco Day in 2023, Dr Rüdiger Krech, director of the Department of Health Promotion at WHO, called tobacco cultivation's apparent economic importance a "myth that we urgently need to dispel".

The UN health agency accuses the tobacco industry of trapping farmers in a "cycle of dependency", leaving them with little control over prices and quality while companies take the profits.

### THE LONG-TERM HAZARDS

Tobacco cultivation uses land, fertiliser and water, while handling and curing leaves can expose workers and their families to health risks.

Dozens of farmers interviewed in northern districts described nicotine residue on their hands and breathing difficulties among family members when leaves were stored or cured at home.

"When [tobacco] is kept at home, the children have difficulty breathing. Women also have difficulty breathing," Saiful said. Green tobacco sickness, a form of nicotine poisoning, occurs when nicotine from wet leaves is absorbed through the skin. Pregnant and postpartum women sometimes have to stay elsewhere during the curing season.

His wife opposes the crop. "Of course, she stops me. But then, you see, because of the temptation... I see the money," he said.

The effects on soil are also documented. A two-year study published in SN Applied Sciences in 2021 compared tobacco fields in Rangpur Sadar, Badarganj and Gangachara with non-tobacco fields in Mithapukur. It found declines in soil organic matter and nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and sulphur between 2019 and 2020.

A 2026 study in Mirpur upazila of Kushtia also found lower nutrient levels in tobacco-growing soils.

Land use is another concern. A 2021 survey in northern Bangladesh found that more than half of respondents believed tobacco was replacing traditional food crops.

Tobacco is mainly grown in the Rabi season, when farmers could otherwise cultivate food crops. Farida Akhter, executive director of UBINIG, said it can prevent farmers from growing other crops on the same land for two seasons, sometimes three.

"On one hand, the government is promoting crop diversification, while on the other, tobacco cultivation is preventing farmers from growing alternative crops during the Rabi season, putting nutritional security at risk," she said.

According to the DAE, tobacco covered 21,290 hectares across five Rangpur-region districts in 2026, up from 18,734 hectares a year earlier. Lalmonirhat accounted for 18,225 hectares.

Acreage has gradually declined, although it sometimes rises again when prices are high, said Rangpur DAE's Alam. The department is promoting alternatives such as mustard and maize through government incentives.

A government policy to regulate tobacco cultivation, initiated around 2016-17, remains pending, Farida said. "It does not necessarily call for a ban. It proposes regulating tobacco cultivation so that it does not create food insecurity or take away land needed for food production."

Rumana said replacing tobacco required more than awareness campaigns. Farmers needed finance, technical advice and, above all, reliable markets for alternative crops.

"We need to connect them with the market for the new products they will produce, so that there is a direct market link and their profitability is ensured. We have to do the opposite of what the tobacco companies do," she said.

Agricultural economist MA Sattar Mandal said tobacco cultivation should be viewed through farm profitability rather than by portraying farmers as choosing a harmful crop.

Farmers consider soil conditions, land type and profitability before deciding what to grow. At prevailing prices, Boro rice may not cover costs such as diesel and other inputs.

"I cannot simply go there and tell farmers what to do. I need to give them an alternative output that is more profitable, with technological and other support to increase productivity," Sattar said. Access to finance was also necessary.

### THE TAX HIKE CONUNDRUM

BAT Bangladesh, Japan Tobacco International and Abul Khair Tobacco together account for about 99 percent of the formal cigarette supply market.

For decades, the government has raised tobacco taxes to discourage consumption. The total tax rate has reached about 83 percent, one of the highest in the world.

Yet the market has shifted towards cheaper cigarettes. National Board of Revenue data show that the high-price segment's share fell from around 15 percent in fiscal 2006-07 to 2.85 percent in 2024-25, while the low-price segment expanded to nearly 60 percent.

Recorded cigarette sales fell from 8,400 crore sticks in fiscal 2023-24 to 6,500 crore in 2024-25. But this does not establish that smoking declined by the same amount.

In August 2025, then NBR Chairman Md Abdur Rahman Khan said contraband and counterfeit cigarettes had surged despite higher taxes and prices. The government had expected an additional Tk 10,000 crore from tobacco tax increases, but the revenue had not materialised.

He pointed to untaxed foreign cigarettes entering the country and locally produced counterfeit products.

A PRI study presented in May 2026 estimated that potential revenue losses from illicit cigarette trade reached nearly Tk 4,700 crore in 2025, up 106 percent from the previous year. It also estimated that legal cigarette consumption fell from 74.6 billion sticks to 61.3 billion.

Tobacco is not native to Bangladesh. Commercial cultivation took shape in the mid-1960s, when BAT began experimenting with flue-cured Virginia tobacco, a variety used in cigarette production, in what was then East Pakistan.

After independence, the company expanded cultivation around the Teesta basin in Rangpur, where alluvial soil and cool, dry winters were considered suitable. It brought farmers into a supply system, organising leaf purchases. Other varieties followed, and cultivation spread to Kushtia, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and parts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Companies established growing areas and secured supplies by providing inputs and buying arrangements. That relationship remains central to tobacco cultivation, generating immediate profits for farmers, manufacturers and the state while leaving the country with far greater long-term costs.







