A different me in every corner of Dhaka

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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.

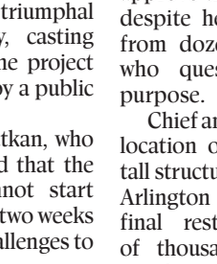
Perhaps that is the thing about Dhaka. Here, we change the streets, and the streets change us. And every neighbourhood, in turn, comes to know a different version of us!

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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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.