



A drone view shows the waterlogged Shareghata area of Khulna's Dumuria upazila. Residents of almost half of the 56 Ashrayan homes have moved to stay with their relatives after the area went under water about two months ago due to monsoon rains. The rest of the occupants still have to endure appalling living conditions. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## How Hasina's flight was kept off radar

ZYMA ISLAM and PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

When the air force transporter plane carrying Sheikh Hasina left Dhaka on August 5, it took off as a training flight and turned off its transponders to blur its flightpath and location.

The transponders, which transmit location, heading, altitude and speed, and the automatic geolocator system, were not turned on until the aircraft was close to Indian airspace in West Bengal, several sources told The Daily Star.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of flight AJAX1431's progress strip from air traffic control. The flight progress strip is a small card which the ATC use to track a certain plane in the air so that planes don't collide mid air.

This paper also obtained a recording of the radio communications between the cockpit of the Lockheed C-130 Hercules aircraft and the ATC in Dhaka.

The flight progress strip shows that Hasina's plane took off from Dhaka's Bangabandhu Airbase, on the west of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, at 3:09pm.

Just 30 minutes prior to this, tens of thousands of protesters took control of the

Gono Bhaban, Hasina's then official residence. Army chief Waker Uz Zaman was initially scheduled to address the nation at 2:00pm to formally announce Hasina's resignation. This was later postponed to 3:00pm, but he eventually made his address around 4:00pm.

In an interview with a New York-based nagoriktv.com in the last week of August, Waker said that he did not know that Hasina was flying away.

"When I was holding discussions with the political parties, somebody informed me that she is going to exit the country, she is on the run. I did not know that she was leaving the country. I think that if she had stayed, it could have been a risk to her life. Definitely, nobody would have wanted an extra-judicial killing to have happened. The situation was extremely volatile," he said.

The plane turned on its transponders and automatic geolocator system when it reached waypoint "BEMAK" on Dhaka-Kolkata route. The aircraft suddenly showed up on radar. It first headed towards Kolkata before changing course for Hindon Air Force base

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## Landslides kill six in Cox's Bazar

Heavy rains send parts of the town under water



STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Six people from two families were killed in separate landslides triggered by incessant rain in Sadar and Ukhiya upazilas of Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

Among the deceased are Akhi Momi, wife of Mizanur Rahman from Dakshin Dikkul in Sadar upazila, and her two daughters Miha Jannat Naima and Latifa Islam.

The three other victims are siblings Abdur Rahim, Abdul Hafeez and Abdul Waheed, all residents of Rohingya refugee camp 14 at Hakimpura in Ukhiya.

Relatives of Akhi Momi said they heard a loud noise coming from near Mizanur's

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## Half of Noakhali still reeling from flood

Clogging of canals leads to prolonged inundation

ANWARUL HAIDER, and MOSTAFA SHABUJ

Sixty-year-old Kofil Uddin watched helplessly as floodwater crept into his home at Bhabani Jibanpur village in Noakhali's Begumganj upazila on August 10. More than a month has passed, but the house is still under knee-deep water.

Floods devastated much of Chattogram and Sylhet divisions in Bangladesh last month following a sudden surge of water from the upstream in India, coupled with heavy rainfall. Although floodwater has receded in most areas, more than half of Noakhali remains under water.

Kofil and other locals, along with officials and experts, have blamed the clogging of canals by encroachers for the prolonged floods in the district, which one of the elderly residents called unprecedented in living memory.

Md Abdullah, 70, another resident of Bhabani Jibanpur village, said he had never seen such destruction by floods in his life.

"We've been marooned by flood for one month," he said and complained that he received no relief when he stayed in the Chhoyani Girls High School for 15 days during the flood.

After the floods affected at least 21 lakh residents in the district last

month, 60,000-70,000 people are still living in shelters, said Noakhali Deputy Commissioner Dewan Mahabubur Rahman.

As long as the educational institutions have been turned into flood shelters, the authorities are unable to resume academic activities and they have requested the local administration to move the people to other places.

The canals in the district are also filled with garbage, while fish farms and unplanned sluice gates, regulators or cross dams have blocked the natural flow of water into the Meghna river.

Besides elongated suffering of the locals by the flooding, the effects of climate change have fuelled further concerns about the possibility of saline water from the sea entering the district and getting stranded in the low-lying areas, which will impact farming and source of fresh water.

Kofil said rain and flood water of Begumganj upazila flows through Gabua canal via Lakshimpur into the Meghna river. A sluice gate was constructed three kilometres upstream from his village around 10 years ago. "This has been an obstacle to the natural drainage system. As a result, the flood water is not rereading significantly."

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## Dengue claimed at least 20 lives over last 12 days

5,200 hospitalised: DGHS

HELEMUL ALAM

The dengue outbreak is becoming deadlier with at least 5,200 hospitalisations and 20 deaths from the mosquito-borne disease reported in the first 13 days of this month.

The government recorded 6,521 dengue cases and 27 deaths throughout last month.

This year, 18,041 dengue patients were hospitalised across the country and almost two thirds of them were from outside the capital, the health directorate said.

Inadequate mosquito-killing activities, surveillance and awareness are the main reasons why more people are getting infected outside Dhaka, experts said.

Unless urgent steps are taken, the situation will be worse, they added.

So far this year, the disease borne by Aedes mosquitoes has claimed 103 lives, and at least 10,154 were admitted to hospitals outside Dhaka.

Of the total cases, 61.9 percent of the patients are male and the rest are female. Of those who died, 51.5 percent are female, according to DGHS data.

Moreover, 2,613 patients are aged 21 to 25, 2,440 are aged 26 to 30, and 2,227 are 16 to 20.

Ten patients died in each of 06-10 and 46-50 age groups.

Entomologist Monzur A Chowdhury said corruption and lack of initiatives in lean season were responsible for the rising number of cases in Dhaka and elsewhere.

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The capital's Mugda Medical College and Hospital is swamped with dengue patients as the disease is prevalent in the city. Doctors said 130 dengue patients were undergoing treatment at the hospital yesterday noon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## US TEAM'S VISIT Economy, trade high on agenda

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A high-profile US delegation is arriving in Dhaka today on a two-day visit that will focus on trade and challenges in the economy, including a dollar shortage and money laundering.

This will be the first visit by any US delegation to Dhaka after the formation of the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus, which has undertaken a massive reform process in the state institutions and the economy following the fall of the Awami League government.

The delegation includes Donald Lu, US assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, who will fly to Dhaka from India and join other delegation members.

Brent Neiman, deputy under secretary for International Finance at the US Department of the Treasury, and officials of

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## 1 dead, three go missing as trawler capsizes in Bay 19 others rescued

UNB, Cox's Bazar

A fishermen died and three remained missing, while 19 others were rescued after a fishing trawler, "FB Rashida" carrying 23 fishermen, capsized during a storm in the Bay of Bengal yesterday afternoon.

The incident occurred near Laboni Point in Cox's Bazar.

The deceased is Jamal, a resident of Chattogram's Lohagara.

According to Osman Gani, senior in-charge of Sea Safe Lifeguard, the trawler capsized due to a storm. One of the rescued, Jamal, was critically injured and declared dead after being taken to the hospital. The others are receiving treatment.

"We have spoken to the injured fishermen, who mentioned there were 23 fishermen onboard," he said.

Tanvir Hossain, magistrate of the Tourist Cell of Cox's Bazar District Administration, said, "The trawler is now ashore, and there are a few fishermen still missing."

"Once the injured are stable, we will be able to gather more details," he added.

## Dengue

FROM PAGE 1

In the lean season, meaning November to February, fewer people are infected by the virus. If the authorities identify the homes of those patients and thoroughly rid those of mosquitoes and the breeding spots, then there will be fewer dengue cases throughout the rest of the year.

"The authorities ignore this suggestion every year," he said.

The current outbreak can be tackled only through identifying the hotspots and taking measures, he added.

Pointing out the limitations of the database on dengue, Monzur said the DGHS data is sourced only from 81 district and division-level hospitals.

But dengue patients are treated at over 16,000 public and private hospitals, clinics, and other facilities, said the former president of Zoological Society of Bangladesh.

Without proper data, the preventive steps will always remain ineffective.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, said, "Leadership is important in anti-mosquito campaigns. But there is no mayor. Since dengue has now spread to union parishad areas, local government bodies will have to be prepared to curb the Aedes population. Equipment, logistics, and necessary training will be required."

The local government bodies must be equipped to act and the government should provide the funds.

Raising awareness, organising anti-mosquito campaigns, and implementing compulsory measures such as dengue testing, and ensuring hospitalisation of individuals experiencing a second infection are crucial, he added.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman said the absence of surveillance in district towns was a major failure on the part of the authorities.

"The government must have effective surveillance to identify dengue hotspots. This will enable the local government departments, community organisations, and educational institutions to conduct targeted interventions," he said.

After the fall of the Awami League government in early August, 12 city corporation mayors, 330 municipality mayors and administrators, almost all the zilla and upazila parishad chairmen were removed.

The interim government then appointed administrators to carry out the responsibilities of the mayors.



PHOTO: ANIK SHARIAR

The roads and homes of Bhupatipur village under Chhoyani union in Noakhali's Begumganj upazila were still submerged on September 11, a month after devastation by flash floods. Around 70 percent of eight upazilas in the district have been affected by prolonged flooding.

## Half of Noakhali still reeling from flood

FROM PAGE 1

Apart from Hatia, the remaining eight upazilas of Noakhali were hit by floods. Around 60 percent of these upazilas are still under water. The most affected upazilas are Begumganj, Senbagh, Chatkhil, Sonaimuri, and Sadar.

Md Salim of Baro Sardar Para of Senbagh upazila said the roads and homes of the village are still under water with all the canals in the area blocked, filled up with garbage or encroached on.

"We are requesting the government to investigate the matter and clear the canals. We do not seek any other assistance," he said.

Munshi Amir Faisal, executive engineer of the Water Development Board in Noakhali, said only 2 cm of floodwater receded in the district from 6:00am to 6:00pm last Wednesday.

The water from Chatkhil, Sonaimuri, Begumganj, and Sadar upazilas falls into the Meghna river through the Rahmatkhali canal of Lakshmipur district through the Rahmatkhali regulator, according to him.

"However, the Lakshmipur part of the Rahmatkhali canal has not been excavated for a long time. Due to this, floodwater is not receding quickly. Moreover, there is a pile of

garbage in every canal."

A cross dam was constructed in an area of 16 km up from Mannan Nagar to Atakpalia of sadar upazila in 1964 to save 71,000 hectares of land in Subarnachar upazila from river erosion.

But due to the construction of the dam, Subarnachar has become a higher ground than sadar upazila, obstructing the natural drainage system, Faisal said.

Abdul Awal, executive director of Noakhali Rural Development Society who is vocal about the environmental degradation, said hundreds of big ponds

dug in Noakhali earlier for holding rainwater have been filled up for construction.

Noakhali and Lakshmipur had numerous small and big canals, including Noakhali, Begumganj's Wabda, and Bhulua, which were interconnected, according to him.

"Now the canals have been encroached on for fish farming. So, the path for floodwater to the sea is now blocked," Awal said.

"Today's Majidee town itself was once a big canal named Chhagalmara. Noakhali was next to Chhagalmara. Water used to go to Lakshmipur

through these canals. Noakhali had a natural drainage system in the past. Now all canals are blocked by illegal structures, plastic garbage, or other objects," he said.

He suggested using satellite imagery to find out the path of the natural flow of water.

"It is very important to identify the obstacles and then remove them on a priority basis. The sea levels continue to rise. In that case, the saline water of the sea can enter the land and stay for a long time. To end this crisis, the government needs to have a mega plan," Awal said.

## How Hasina's flight was kept off radar

FROM PAGE 1

In Ghaziabad, 30km from the Indian capital, according to a screen grab of the radar screen at the Dhaka airport.

Aviation experts said that it was likely that the plane made the detour, by going towards Kolkata first instead of flying straight to Delhi, because it wanted to spend as little time as possible in Bangladesh airspace.

The Dhaka to Delhi route flies over Rajshahi and requires several minutes more in Bangladesh airspace than the Dhaka to Kolkata route.

Indian Foreign Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told

operating in its airspace. Before taking off, the crew manually enters this code into the aircraft's transponder.

When a flight plan is approved, the code is sent to the destination air traffic controller, in this case it was Kolkata.

Civil aviation sources said there is a direct hotline between Dhaka and Kolkata's air traffic control to notify each other about approaching planes.

Even though the plane was invisible to secondary radar, used by ATCs, the cockpit crew maintained continuous communication with different air traffic controllers, including

The ground controller warns the plane that two Antonov An-32s were there and to taxi with caution. The plane was later cleared for an initial altitude of 20,000 feet by the ATC.

"AJX 1431 [...] cleared for take-off, after take-off, left turn 238 [heading], continue climb [to] flight level 200 [20,000 feet], we are rolling," said the pilot as he repeated the controller's instructions as required and notified the ATC that the plane was taking off.

The tower responded, "Roger" and Sheikh Hasina's flight was in the air.

After AJAX1431 crossed 4,000 feet, the pilot contacted the Dhaka area

Dhaka ATC.

The ATC then also alerted the cockpit crew about traffic, an Airbus A320 heading for Dhaka. It said the Airbus was above them and was descending to 26,000 feet.

Soon afterwards, Dhaka ATC said, "AJX 1431 change to Kolkata control", which means it asked the crew to get in touch with the Kolkata area controller and announce its arrival. This is usually done when the flight is close to the border, sources said.

Air Commodore AFM Atiquzzaman, member (operations & planning) at the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh was at the

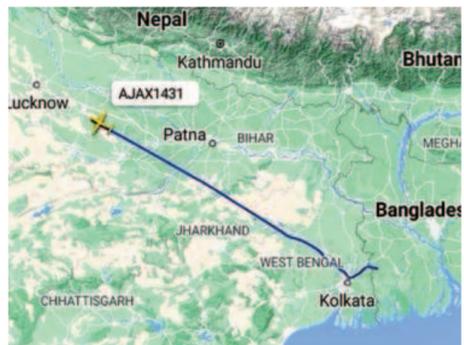
India Today, after Hasina's plane crossed the border, it was escorted by two Dassault Rafale fighter jets of the 101 squadron at Hashimara airbase in West Bengal.

The fighters were waiting for the C-130.

India Today on August 6 said the Indian authorities started monitoring the flight around 10km from the Indian border with Bangladesh.

Sources claimed that neither Hasina, nor her sister Sheikh Rehana, or the flight crew and Security Services Force (SSF) members went through immigrations before departing Dhaka.

Hasina was carrying a diplomatic passport,



The flight path of AJAX1431 charted by flightradar24.com on August 5.

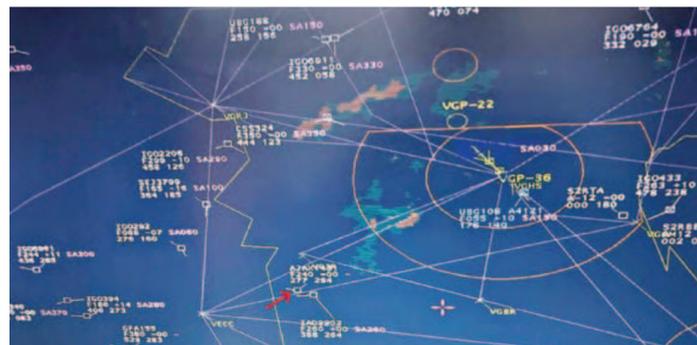
the Rajya Sabha on August 6 that Hasina had sought approval to come to India on a "short notice".

According to the flight progress strip, Indian authorities were notified of the plane entering its airspace.

Hasina's flight was given squawk code 4131, a unique four-digit code assigned by the ATC to each aircraft

the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's traffic controller, and most likely the Kolkata area air traffic controller.

The recording of the radio communications between the C-130 and the ground controller at Dhaka reveals that flight AJAX1431 chose taxiway South Alpha to get on runway 32 from Bangabandhu Airbase.



A screen grab of the radar monitor at Dhaka ATC shows flight AJAX1431 after it switched on its transponders moments before it entered Indian airspace.

control centre.

"Dhaka control AJX 1431, crossing 110 [11,000 feet] continuing [to] 200 [20,000 feet] and we will be just 15 miles left deviation," informed the pilot.

"Fifteen miles left deviation approved," said the controller in Dhaka.

The crew eventually sought clearance for 24,000 feet, which was approved by

ATC tower when Hasina's plane took off. He saw the plane take to the sky.

"At that moment I had no idea who was inside that flight. I was there in the tower just doing my normal duty when I saw an Air Force training flight taking off. I did not know of course who was inside," Atiquzzaman told The Daily Star.

According to a report of

while Rehana had a British passport.

According to Indian media, the plane landed at Hindon airbase at 6:15pm (Dhaka time).

Hasina was then taken to a safe house provided by the Indian government in Noida, Uttarakhnad province.

The SSF members and the crew flew back to Bangladesh a day later.

## MEETING WITH BSF BGB strongly protests border killings

BSS, Thakurgaon

The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) has strongly protested and condemned border killings, highlighting the incident where a 15-year-old Bangladeshi youth, Jayanta Kumar Singh, was shot dead by BSF at Baladangi point in Thakurgaon on September 9.

BGB (Rangpur Region) raised the issue when Indian Border Security Force (BSF) North Bengal Frontier held a courtesy meeting with BGB at the Banglabandha-Phulbari Integrated Check Post ICP on the Bangladesh India border on Thursday, according to a BGB press release issued yesterday.

In response, Inspector General (IG) of BSF North Bengal Frontier Shri Surya Kumar Sharma expressed regret for the unexpected incident involving the BSF.

He also assured the BGB delegation that the BSF would not open fire on any Bangladeshi citizens along the border areas in the future.

The meeting was also attended, among others, by Rangpur Region Commander of the BGB Brigadier General Khandaker Shafiquzzaman, Deputy Inspector Generals (DIGs) of the Siliguri and Kishanganj Sectors and other BGB and BSF officials.

Both the paramilitary forces also agreed to work jointly on curbing cross-border crimes, preventing illegal border crossing, and raising awareness among the citizens of both countries residing in the border areas.

## BARAPUKURIA POWER PLANT Partial operation resumes after 3-day shutdown

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Following a three-day complete shutdown, the 525MW Barapukuria Coal-Based Thermal Power Plant in Dinajpur has resumed operation partially.

Following necessary repairs, the plant's Unit 1 began generating electricity at half capacity around 8:30pm Thursday.

Although this unit, one of three, is capable of generating 125MW of electricity, it's currently supplying 60.65 MW to the national grid, according to Chief Engineer Md Abu Bakar Siddique.

Unit 1 has been offline since September 6 while Unit 3, which has been offline since late July, briefly operated from September 6 to September 9 before a technical glitch shut it down again.

An official from the plant's electrical department said although the plant has three units, power is usually generated by Unit 1 and Unit 3, while Unit 2 remains inactive for various reasons.

Since November 2020, the 125 MW Unit 2 - which previously contributed 65.70MW - has been inactive.

In late July this year, the 275 MW Unit 3, which usually produces 190-250 MW, also ceased operations.

The remaining Unit 1 was operational till September 5 and was generating 60.65MW before being taken offline for necessary repairs, said the chief engineer.

On September 6, Unit 3 was brought back online but was shut down again on September 9 due to a failure of the oil pump.

This led to a complete halt in power production, which caused severe load shedding in eight northern districts.

The power plant, which depends on coal supplied by the nearby Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Limited (BCMCL), requires about 5,500 tonnes of coal daily to operate all three units at full capacity.

Currently, BCMCL has a stockpile of 2,30,000 tonnes, and the mine supplies around 3,000-3,500 tonnes daily.

However, all three units are never operated simultaneously. Harbin International and CMC XMC, both Chinese companies, are on contracts to handle the plant's maintenance and operations.

Their five-year contract is set to expire next year. The contractors have requested 15 days to resolve the issue, and once the necessary machinery arrives from China, Unit 3 is expected to be back online, added the chief engineer.

## Economy, trade

FROM PAGE 1

USAID and the Office of the US Trade Representative will also be in the delegation.

They will tomorrow call on Chief Adviser Prof Yunus, Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain, and Finance Adviser Saleh Uddin Ahmed, Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin told reporters at his ministry on Thursday.

He added that the delegation will also hold an official meeting with him over lunch that day.

Officials from the ministries of foreign affairs, finance, commerce, labour, and Bangladesh Bank are also scheduled to be present.

"US and Bangladeshi officials will discuss how the United States can support Bangladesh's economic growth, financial stability and development needs," said the US State Department in a statement ahead of the visit.

"The United States is optimistic that, by implementing needed reforms, Bangladesh can address its economic vulnerabilities and build a foundation for continued growth and increased prosperity," Brent Neiman told The Financial Times on Tuesday.

The delegation is expected to discuss Bangladesh's fiscal and monetary policy, and the health of its financial system, he said.

Bangladesh's relations with the US were strained during the AL government. In December 2021, Washington imposed sanctions on the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) over allegations of extrajudicial killings.

In 2023, the US announced a visa policy for Bangladeshis ahead of the general elections. Following

the January 2024 elections, the US declared that the elections were neither free nor participatory.

"The US delegation's visit after the formation of the interim government only demonstrates how the US gives importance to our relationship," Foreign Secretary Jashim said on Thursday.

"The discussion will be multidimensional. We are also preparing accordingly. In general, I would say, the government wants a mutual beneficial relationship," he said without detailing the meeting agenda.

A diplomatic source said withdrawing sanctions on Rab will require time. Meanwhile, Washington can work in supporting reforms in law enforcement, including on accountability, prosecution, and training.

According to foreign ministry officials, Dhaka is expecting Washington to provide funds under the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) that provides equity finance. The US has been working on smart grid systems in Bangladesh. This can be an area of financing.

Earlier, Washington said finance under DFC requires improvement of labour condition - something that the current government is working on.

Another official said the US wants an improved investment climate and reforms in the financial management sector, especially in preventing financial fraud. With all these reforms now underway, hopefully, the US will come ahead with more investment, the official said.

## AL govt behind 800 enforced disappearances

Claims Rizvi

STAR REPORT

BNP Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday accused the Awami League government of orchestrating the forced disappearances of at least 800 BNP leaders and activists, along with carrying out extrajudicial killings, over the past 15 years.

Rizvi made these claims while visiting the home of Abdur Rashid, who was injured on August 4, during a clash between protesters, AL men, and law enforcers in Dinajpur and was forced to sell his newborn daughter to fund his treatment.

The Daily Star had previously reported on Rashid's plight on September 8, highlighting how the day labourer and his wife sold their three-day-old daughter for Tk 37,000 to pay for his treatment.

While talking to the press during his visit, Rizvi condemned the previous AL government, alleging it was responsible for such tragic incidents.

"We now hear rumours of Hasina's return. She wants to reclaim her throne and continue her rule," he said.

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Pritilata Brigade, a youth-led organisation, staged a protest in the Shahbag area yesterday, demanding justice for the rape of a 70-year-old woman in Dhaka on September 8. They also called for the safety of women in all spheres of society.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## ATTACKS ON STUDENT PROTESTS 'Ensure justice for martyrs, injured'

Ganosamhati says at least 22 killed, 227 injured in Mohammadpur, Adabor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 22 people were killed in the Mohammadpur-Adabor area of the capital during the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement that ousted the Awami League government.

Additionally, 227 people were injured, while two are still missing, according to a list prepared by Ganosamhati Andolon, unveiled at a programme at the Bengali Medium High School in the capital.

"Based on the information we have gathered, we have currently listed 22 people as killed, 227 as injured, and two as missing. The digitisation of this list is also underway. Next week, the summarised list along with supporting documents will be submitted to the advisers of the ministries of health and home affairs," said Faiyaz Firoz, an organiser of Ganosamhati in Mohammadpur-Adabor.

At the event, the family members of the slain and injured protesters recounted their experiences and placed various demands.

Mahburur Rahman, father of a deceased named Shaikat, said they faced harassment when they tried to file cases.

He also demanded preparing a full-fledged list of the deceased and injured and unveil it immediately.

Sister of another deceased Mahin said, "My brother left behind two children while he was the only breadwinner of our family. We have no respite from this endless distress."

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## BODIES ON VAN Rab arrests DB inspector Arafat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion members have arrested DB inspector Arafat Hossain over the incident of piling up and torching bodies near Ashulia Police Station during the student movement on August 5.

A team of Rab-3 arrested Arafat, inspector of Dhaka district north Detective Police, from Aftabnagar in Dhaka early yesterday, confirmed an official of Rab's Legal and Media wing.

A video of several partially covered bloodstained bodies on a van with some policemen standing by went viral on social media on August 30, raising questions about the possible disrespectful handling of the bodies of quota movement victims.

Bodies covered with bedsheets with hands stretched out can be seen in the nearly two-minute video.

Of the policemen standing beside the van, two were wearing police vests and were seen throwing another body onto the piles.

In the video, DB inspector (investigation) Arafat Hossain was seen walking unarmed.

Another video that went viral on social media showed that the bodies on the van were burning while some policemen were standing nearby.

## TAQI MURDER

# Hasina's fall brings new hope for justice

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAH

Tanwir Muhammad Taqi, a bright youngster and son of cultural activist Rafiur Rabbi, went missing on March 6, 2013.

The 17-year-old left his home on Shaista Khan Road in Narayanganj, heading towards a local library.

Two days later, his body was found floating in the Shitalakkhya River.

The day after his body was discovered, his A-level results were released. Taqi had achieved the highest mark in the world for physics, scoring 297 out of 300.

On March 8, 2013, Rabbi filed a murder case with Narayanganj Sadar Model Police Station. On March 18, he submitted a supplementary complaint, accusing seven named individuals, including influential political figure Shamim Osman, alongside 8-10 unnamed others, of being involved in his son's murder.

The case was transferred to the Rapid Action Battalion by order of the High Court in June 2013.

Taqi's parents saw a glimpse of hope days before Taqi's first death anniversary when a leaked Rab probe implicated 11 people in Taqi's murder.

Among them was Azmery Osman, the son of late Jatiyo Party lawmaker Nasim Osman

and the nephew of Shamim Osman.

Col Ziaul Ahsan, the then additional director general of Rab, said at the time they had gathered enough evidence to implicate the 11 suspects and promised that a charge sheet would be filed soon.

Yet, despite his assurances, that day of justice remained elusive.

Ten years passed, and Taqi's family was still waiting.

of Nasim Osman in April 2014, where she vowed to "take care" of the Osman family.

From that moment, it seemed, any momentum towards justice for Taqi was lost.

But Rabbi never gave up. He pressed on, hoping that one day the system that had failed him would be held accountable.

That day may finally be here. The tables have turned following Hasina's ouster from power

I hope the current administration will uplift the fragile and broken judiciary and bring justice to the doorstep of the people," Rabbi said.

After years of fighting against a system stacked against him, he is finally beginning to believe that justice for Taqi might be within reach.

In 2013, two cadres of the Osman family — Yusuf Hossain alias Liton and Sultan Shawkat Bhramor — confessed in court that Taqi was tortured and killed in Azmery Osman's torture cell.

Rabbi claimed that after Nasim and Shamim Osman met Hasina, she ordered the then director general and additional director general of Rab to halt the investigation. From then on, all progress in the murder case stopped, he said.

After Rab's findings were leaked, Rabbi asked why Shamim Osman and his son Ayon Osman weren't named.

Rab official Ziaul Ahsan told him he was instructed not to include them, Rabbi said.

Initially, police investigated the case and quickly found links to the Osman family.

Three days after Taqi's murder, a detective gave Rabbi an audio recording of a conversation between Nasim Osman and his son Azmery.

"After hearing it, I was sure

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**The government has changed. I hope the current administration will uplift the fragile and broken judiciary and bring justice to the doorstep of the people.**

RAFIUR RABBI  
Father of Taqi

Lt Col Tanveer Mahmud Pasha, the commanding officer of Rab-II, recently told this newspaper

Rab had reached the final stages of the investigation within the first year of the murder. However, due to "hidden pressure," they were unable to move forward.

For years, Rabbi pointed his finger at former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, accusing her of stalling the investigation.

Hasina gave a speech in parliament following the death

on August 5, 2024, through a student-led mass uprising.

With the Osman family now in hiding and no longer enjoying political protection, the investigation into Taqi's murder has been revived.

In the past few days, Rab has arrested four suspects in connection with the case, all close associates of the Osman clan.

After a decade of heartbreak, Rabbi's hope is now rekindled. "The government has changed.

## Hilsa eggs: a delicacy out of reach for many

Price increased by 150pc in 2 yrs, now selling at Tk 3,000 per kg



SHAHEEN MOLLAH and NILIMA JAHAN

Do you love hilsa eggs? If so, you're not alone. For many families, especially the little ones at home, these delicate, flavourful eggs are a cherished treat. But this season, getting your hands on this once-affordable delicacy may prove a real challenge.



The price of hilsa eggs has skyrocketed by 150 percent in just two years. What was priced at Tk 1,200 per kilogramme in 2022, and Tk 1,500 in 2023, has now surged to Tk 3,000 per kilogramme in 2024.

This hike has turned what was once a common indulgence into a rare and costly luxury, increasingly

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## 'Govt did nothing to stop attacks on shrines'

Alleges Farhad Mazhar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Poet and writer Farhad Mazhar yesterday termed the vandalism of shrines across the country pre-planned and said the government took no steps to prevent the attacks.

"Firstly, it is a criminal offence. However, the new government did not take any action to prevent such attacks. Secondly, these attacks on shrines were pre-planned and carried out after public announcements. We have seen these announcements on social media," he said.

Mazhar made these remarks while addressing a human chain at the National Museum premises in the capital.

The event was organised by Bhab baithaki — an idea

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Pedestrians cross a busy road amidst moving traffic yesterday. Some slow down to let cars pass, while others speed up to seize gaps between vehicles. One person is even talking on the phone while crossing. Such reckless behaviour increases the likelihood of accidents. The photo was taken in the capital's Sonargaon intersection.

## Several women attacked, harassed in Cox's Bazar

Videos show some men hitting them with sticks

STAR REPORT

Several women were harassed and assaulted by a group of men in Cox's Bazar, with footage of the incidents circulating on social media.

The Daily Star analysed at least seven videos, and found a group, led by one Mohammad Farukul Islam, attacked women at the sea beach and Lal Dighi areas of Cox's Bazar on the night of September 11.

In one video, Farukul, who was wielding a stick, and his associates were verbally abusing a woman at the beach and forcing her to do sit-ups while holding her ears.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Hindu Jagran Manch protests attack on minorities

UNB, Dhaka

The Bangladesh Hindu Jagran Manch, a platform advocating for the rights of Hindus, demonstrated in the capital's Shahbagh yesterday, protesting against what they described as torture, vandalism, arson at religious sites, land grabbing, and other atrocities targeting the minority community.

The protesters blocked the Shahbagh intersection in the afternoon, bringing traffic in the area to a halt. Police were deployed to ensure no untoward incidents occurred.

At the protest, the group reiterated their eight-point demand, accusing the government of failing to take effective action to address their concerns.

The key demands include formation of a minority protection committee, establishment of a dedicated ministry for minority communities,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

## 144 firearms recovered in 10 days, 64 arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint drive comprising law enforcement and security agencies arrested 64 people and recovered 144 firearms in the last 10 days.

The recovered weapons include eight revolvers, 41 pistols, 11 rifles, 17 shotguns, five pipe guns, 19 shutter guns, 10 LG guns, 22 guns, one AK 47, one gas gun, one Chinese rifle, one air gun, one tear gas launcher, three SMGs and three single barrel breech loader firearms, said a text message of Police Headquarters yesterday.

On August 25, the interim government suspended licences issued to civilians during the tenure of the AL government – January 6, 2009 to August 5, 2024 – and directed to submit the firearms to nearby police stations by September 3.

After the timeframe, those firearms are to be deemed illegal.

The joint drive comprising the members of the armed forces, BGB, Coast Guard, police, Rab, and Ansar, will also recover illegal firearms and the firearms and bullets looted from different police stations and security forces after the fall of Sheikh Hasina on August 5.

Enamul Haque Sagor, assistant inspector general (media) of PHQ, earlier said the joint drives are targeting three categories of firearms – those stolen or lost from the police, SSF, and other security forces; firearms with suspended licences; and illegal firearms.

According to PHQ database, 5,818 firearms and 6,07,262 bullets were looted from police, different police stations, and establishments. Of those, 3,933 guns and 3,12,857 bullets were recovered by 12:00am on September 5.



Labourers unload sugarcane in bulk off these boats and transport them to Mahilara Bazar in Barishal. Traders from various villages sell the sugarcane at wholesale prices to retailers, with prices ranging from Tk 2,000 to Tk 5,000 per 100 pieces, depending on the size. The photo was taken in Gaurnadi upazila recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Hilsa eggs: a delicacy

FROM PAGE 3

out of reach for many families.

Md Shukkur Ali, a seasoned hilsa trader and owner of Allahr Dan Fish at Kawran Bazar, shared his frustration.

With 35 years of experience in the trade, Shukkur has been selling hilsa eggs for the past two years. "Many customers are shocked when they hear the price. They look at the eggs, ask how much, and then walk away without buying," Shukkur said.

On an average day, Shukkur sells between 1.5 to 2 kilogrammes of hilsa eggs, a far cry from previous seasons. Those who do buy often limit themselves to half a kilogramme or less.

"The demand for hilsa eggs has soared," he said. "We used to buy hilsa with eggs at a much lower price and sell the eggs affordably. But with the price of hilsa rising by Tk 150 per kg since last year, we now need to sell the eggs at Tk 3,000 per kg just to cover costs and sustain our business."

This season, Shukkur bought hilsa with eggs weighing around 500-550 grammes at Tk 950 per kg and sells the fish whole for Tk 1,000 per kg. It takes about 15 to 16 such fish to yield 1 kg of eggs, he said.

"The leftover fish, once

the eggs are removed, are sold at a much lower price – around Tk 500 per kg, mostly to hotels and restaurants," Shukkur added.

Despite the soaring costs, he claims to make a profit of around Tk 350 per kg of hilsa eggs.

The relentless rise in prices can be attributed to the high demand for the fish, despite an export ban, according to Shukkur.

A visit to Shukkur's shop revealed a steady stream of curious customers, all drawn by the allure of hilsa eggs.

Yet many, like Kamal Hossain, a fellow trader from Karwan Bazar, left empty-handed after learning the price.

"When I buy a whole fish with eggs, the amount of eggs is quite small, and the rest of the fish doesn't seem worth the price. I thought buying just the eggs would be a better deal, but at Tk 3,000 per kg, it's simply beyond my budget."

Kamal left the shop, hoping that prices would drop in the coming weeks.

Not all customers walked away, though.

One man from Tejgaon, after weighing his options, purchased a kg of hilsa eggs for his children, alongside four hilsa, totalling 5.3 kg, for a hefty Tk 8,500. For him, the delicacy was worth the splurge.

## Several women attacked, harassed in Cox's Bazar

FROM PAGE 3

In another incident, the same group approached a woman sitting on a beach chair late at night.

They questioned what she was doing so late at night and forced her to leave, despite her repeatedly saying, "I am just a tourist, what is my fault?"

A third video shows a woman begging policemen near a room at a restaurant at Sugandha Beach to help her retrieve her mobile phone, which had been

taken by the group. "I will buy a ticket and return to Dhaka right away if you return my phone," the woman said.

In another video, Farokul was seen repeatedly hitting a woman who was on a floor with sticks in a room as she begged him to stop.

In another instance, the group intercepted a rickshaw carrying two women. The women were dragged from the vehicle, and as they tried to flee, Farokul chased them with

sticks. Qadaruddin Shishir, Bangladesh editor of AFP Fact Check, also verified the authenticity of the videos and identity of Farokul.

The incidents occurred on the night of September 11, and the videos were posted by Farokul and his associates on Facebook, where they boasted about their actions.

Despite the clear evidence of harassment and assault, law enforcers have yet to take action against

the group responsible for the attacks.

Farokul's Facebook was found deactivated yesterday evening, but it resurfaced later. Most of the videos were deleted.

But there were several posts where he gave justification for his actions, indicating the women they attacked were prostitutes and those criticising them are involved in the trade.

He claimed in another post that the administration is helping

them. Abul Kalam, assistant superintendent of Cox's Bazar Tourist Police, said they were aware of reports that some third-gender individuals were removed from the beach, with one being beaten by youths for allegedly "polluting the area".

He said no complaint has been filed yet, but action will be taken if one is received. Farokul could not be contacted for comments.

## Govt did nothing

FROM PAGE 3

exchange and discussion forum.

"My first question to the current government is why it failed to stop the destruction of these establishments. If it continues to fail, I hold them responsible for the current state of the country," he added.

He demanded that those responsible for the vandalism of shrines be brought to justice and that the shrines be rebuilt using state funds.

"Those who think that Islam is their personal property and vandalise shrines, I would warn them that Islam is not their personal property, it belongs to all," he said.

He emphasised that Islam does not grant anyone the right to take the law into their own hands. "One can express opinions and issue fatwas, but no one has the right to enforce these fatwas on others," he added.

Mazhar went on to say, "We support the government. We do not want it to be weakened in any way. But despite our repeated pleas, the government is not heeding our concerns."

He also said those who vandalise shrines have no

connection to Islam.

Addressing the vandals directly, Mazhar said, "You [those openly announcing plans to vandalise graveyards] have smashed graveyards with hammers and exhumed skulls. I challenge you to go to Tungipara or Ziaur Rahman's grave. Let's see what strength you have to smash those graves."

Highlighting the cultural significance of shrines, Mazhar said the shrines have enriched the country's culture, including its Baul, Bayati, Fakiri, and Bhakti music traditions, as well as different faiths.

"By vandalising the shrines, you [vandals] have broken the hearts of the people and left wounds on our souls," he remarked.

He called on the new director general of the Shilpakala Academy to organise a cultural fair as a fitting response to the shrine attackers.

Speaking at the event, Dhaka University teacher Zobaer Mahmud said the vandalism of shrines not only constitutes a criminal offence, but also infringes on religious freedom.

Representatives from different shrines and dargahs also spoke.

## Hindu Jagran

FROM PAGE 3

an increase in puja holiday, digitalisation of the Pali and Sanskrit Education Board, the allocation of prayer rooms in educational institutions, and the creation of a Hindu Foundation.

The protesters claimed that attacks on minorities have been rising in a systematic manner. They cited recent incidents such as the attack on Utsab Mandal in Khulna and the desecration of idols in Chattogram, Thakurgaon, Rangpur, Nilphamari, and Mymensingh as examples.

On September 12, they said, a temple and house were attacked on Sutrapur Hrishikesh Das Road in Dhaka.

Nirjon Mondal, who arrived from Pirojpur to join the protest, voiced his frustration with the lack of action, saying, "The Sanatani people [Hindus] have always been oppressed under all governments. I was tortured during the Awami League regime and continue to face persecution. A few days ago, we protested, and the interim government assured us of action, but nothing has happened so far."

Meanwhile, thousands of protesters from Chattogram also took to the streets expressing their solidarity with Hindu Jagran Manch in Dhaka.

## Woman found

FROM PAGE 5

When she entered from the back, she found Setara lying on the floor.

Enamul Haque, officer-in-charge of Rupsa Police Station, said Setara's hands, feet, and face had been tied, and there were visible head injuries.

The body was sent to Khulna Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

## NBR server breached

FROM PAGE 5

NBR server is restricted to specific IP addresses, and requires a one-time password sent to the user's mobile phone for verification.

However, investigators revealed that the gang accessed the server from different IP addresses, and no OTPs were sent to the concerned officials' phones.

Both Zakaria and Sonia Sarkar deny any involvement.

"I am not sure who is using my user ID because I did not receive any message from the server on my designated mobile number," Sonia Sarkar said.

This is not an isolated incident.

In the last three years, at least 38 imported consignments were

released illegally using the login credentials of eight revenue officials.

Chattogram Customs has filed several cases and formed investigation committees, but has so far failed to identify the perpetrators.

Customs Commissioner Mohammad Fyazur Rahman said, "Our preliminary investigation suggests a large gang is behind these frauds. We expect law enforcement agencies to uncover the full picture."

Bandar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Kazi Mohammad Sultan Ahasan said, "We have received a case application from customs but no action has been taken yet. A detailed investigation will begin soon, involving senior officials."

## Ensure justice

FROM PAGE 3

Shahadat Hossain, a relative of another slain protester named Raju, said all the people need to work together to build the country for which many like Raju sacrificed their lives.

Monir Hossain, father of Shahriar Hossen Rokon, said the hospital authorities refused to discharge the corpse of his son initially.

An injured protester named Shaheen, who sustained bullet injury, demanded bringing Sheikh Hasina under trial after extraditing her.

Addressing the event, Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati, said the first

step towards building a "New Bangladesh" would be ensuring justice.

He also demanded formation of a commission immediately to prepare the list of the deceased and injured. "We have to make sure that no martyrs are left out and their families are taken care of," he added.

A seven-point demand including bringing all individuals involved in the attacks and killings to justice and declaring the deceased as martyrs were placed at the programme.

It also includes taking appropriate measures to find the missing persons, providing proper medical treatment for the injured at government expense.

## Unrepaired road

FROM PAGE 5

said around 600 students of his institution have been facing difficulties to attend school due to the road's dilapidated state.

Robiul Hossain Bidyut, project manager of Mahub Brothers Pvt Ltd, said complications arose due to encroachments by local businesses and residences, which hindered the road's renovation work.

"Due to the unrest in recent time, the work remained stopped... The work has resumed in full swing. After the drain

work is done, we will start renovating the road. We hope to complete it by December this year," he added.

Connected, Mashuazzaman Khan, chief engineer of KCC, said there has been considerable negligence by the contractor firm, which led to the delay in completing the road's renovation.

"We have written to them that if they do not complete the work by December 31, their license will be blacklisted," he added.

## Hasina's fall brings new hope

FROM PAGE 3

they were behind my son's killing," Rabbi said.

**DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CASE**

Rab-II conducted a drive on Sunday night, arresting Shafayet Hossain Shipon and Mamun Mia from Chashara and Kalir Bazar in Narayanganj city.

The next day, another person, Kajal Hawlader, was arrested from Dhaka.

Their names were on the list of a leaked Rab investigation alongside Azmery Osman.

On Wednesday, Rab arrested Jamshed Sheikh, 36, the driver of Azmery, from Dhaka's Mirpur.

According to the draft probe, Jamshed was driving the car, in which Taqi's body was taken for dumping in the Shitalakhya.

Previously, Yusuf Hossain Liton, Sultan Shawkat Bromor, Rifat, Tayebuddin, and Simanta – all named in the draft report, were arrested in connection with Taqi's murder.

Yusuf and Sultan confessed to the crime before a magistrate, but all five have since been absconding after being

released on bail.

Rab-II CO Pasha said the Taqi murder investigation reached a near conclusion in 2013, but progress slowed after the then CO was transferred.

He mentioned that while many suspects were identified, not all were found, and a committee has been formed to complete the probe.

Pasha said they aim to submit the charge sheet within three months, as the current environment allows for an impartial investigation.

**WHAT WAS IN THE LEAKED REPORT**

According to the leaked probe findings, Azmery not only masterminded the murder, but also directly took part in it.

According to the report, Azmery killed Taqi as his father Rafiur Rabbi, a left-leaning leader and a cultural organiser, along with his supporters actively campaigned for Selina Hayat Ivy ahead of the Narayanganj City Corporation election.

At his directives, his accomplices abducted Taqi and took him to his

"torture centre" at Winner Fashion on Allama Iqbal Road on March 6, 2013.

Later that night, Azmery and his cohorts beat and strangled Taqi to death.

His body was then put into a sack and taken to Charargop area in Azmery's car.

From there, the killers took the body to Kumudini Jora Khal in a boat and dumped it in the Shitalakhya sometime between 1:00am and 1:30am on March 7.

Earlier on August 7, 2013, Rab raided Azmery's "Winner Fashion" office in Narayanganj, seizing blood-stained jeans, a pistol butt, and yaba consumption equipment.

Bullet marks were found on the walls, an almirah, and a sofa.

"Winner Fashion" was one of six known torture cells identified by Taqi Mancha, a citizen platform formed in 2014 to combat crime in Narayanganj.

Neither Shamin Osman nor anyone from his family could be reached for comments. Earlier, he denied any involvement of his family with the killing.

**PRAYER TIMING**  
SEPTEMBER 14

|             |       |      |         |      |
|-------------|-------|------|---------|------|
| Fazr        | Zohr  | Asr  | Maghrib | Esha |
| AZAN 4:35   | 12:45 | 4:30 | 6:14    | 7:45 |
| JAMAAT 5:10 | 1:15  | 4:45 | 6:17    | 8:15 |

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়**  
বসুন্ধরা এক-টুকে দক্ষিণা এভিনিউতে ১৮৫০ বর্গফুটের দক্ষিণমুখী নির্মিতাধীন ফ্ল্যাট।  
ম্যাজিক প্রিক্স হোল্ডিংস লিমিটেড।  
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৬  
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৮

**Lost**  
I. Abdullah Al Mamun, S/O: Abdul Matin Khan, has lost my two passports, number BC0401061 and C0989972 (old), on 11 August 2024. I have filed a GD, number 482, tracking number XGDNK2, on 05 September 2024 at Dhanmondi Model Police Station. Requesting to let me know on 01717601301 if you have found. D-12

**প্লট বিক্রয়**  
বসুন্ধরা আই এন্ড এন্ড্রোনেশন ব্লকে দক্ষিণ মুখী প্লটে ২ দিকে রাস্তা সম্পূর্ণ বাউন্ডারি করা রেডি প্লট জরুরী বিক্রয় হবে।  
যোগাযোগ: ০৯৩২২-৮৪০০৬৪

**ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়**  
বসুন্ধরা এক-টুকে ১৫০০ বর্গফুটের শতভাগ রেডি ফ্ল্যাট।  
ম্যাজিক প্রিক্স হোল্ডিংস লিমিটেড।  
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৬  
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৭

**ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়**  
লালমাটিয়া বি-ব্লক-এ ১৬০০ বর্গফুটের শতভাগ রেডি ব্র্যান্ড নিউ ফ্ল্যাট।  
ম্যাজিক প্রিক্স হোল্ডিংস লিমিটেড।  
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৭  
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৬

**ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়**  
বসুন্ধরা আবাসিক এলাকায় আকর্ষণীয় লোকেশনে ১৫০০, ১৭০০, ২২০০ ও ২৩০০ বর্গফুটের ৩ টি ফ্ল্যাট গ্যাস, পানি ও বিদ্যুৎ সংযোগসহ জরুরী বিক্রয় হবে।  
যোগাযোগ: ০৯৩২২-৮৪০০৬৪

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Office of the Jail Super  
Pirojpur District Jail  
(jailsuperpirojpurjail@yahoo.com)  
Memo No-58.04.7900.153.04.016.2024-2937  
Date- 12 September 2024

**e-Tender Notice**  
(Tender No. pirojpurjail/dal/app-01/2024-2025 Dal articles of Pirojpur Jail) e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP System portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the Procurement of the goods.

| Sl. No | Tender ID No. | Name of Work & Period   | Procurement method       | Tender Publishing, Closing/Opening Date & Time |
|--------|---------------|---|--------------------------|--|
| 01     | 1015566       | Supply of Dal (Mota Mashur Dal).<br>Period-01 October 2024 to 31 March 2025 | Open Tender Method (OTM) | Pub-12-Sep-2024<br>29-Sep-2024 10:50 AM        |
| 02     | 1015567       | Supply of Dal (Soru Mashur Dal).<br>Period-01 October 2024 to 31 March 2025 | Open Tender Method (OTM) | Pub-12-Sep-2024<br>29-Sep-2024 11:20 AM        |
| 03     | 1015568       | Supply of Dal (Solar Dal).<br>Period-01 October 2024 to 31 March 2025       | Open Tender Method (OTM) | Pub-12-Sep-2024<br>29-Sep-2024 11:50 AM        |

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Mostofa Kamal  
Jail Super  
Pirojpur District Jail.

GD - 432

## NBR server breached again

Cybercriminals attempt to release Tk 14cr liquor consignment using credentials of 2 officials

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

A cybercriminal gang attempted to release a container of liquor worth Tk 14 crore from Chattogram Port after breaching the National Board of Revenue's server using login credentials of two customs officials.

The gang reportedly accessed the server over 100 times, using the user IDs and passwords of the officials to release the goods, which were seized by customs on September 4.

Customs records reveal that the consignment was imported by Narayanganj-based Supreme Smart Wear Limited, a readymade garments factory, from China on December 18 last year.

A case was filed yesterday at Bandar Police Station, implicating eight individuals, including Supreme Smart Wear Limited Chairman Anisur Rahman Sinha, Ashraf Hossain Raju, Md Ripan, Mizanur Rahman, and four owners of Hafiz Trading - Khaled Hossain Mamun, Md Bakir Hossain, Abdul Gafur Bhuiyan, and Usuf Afjal.

Hafiz Trading, a clearing and forwarding agent, had submitted documents to customs to release the goods on behalf of the importer.

According to the import records, Ashraf Hossain Raju, Md Ripan, and Mizanur Rahman collected the documents from a shipping agent and submitted fake import papers to customs and the port authorities.

However, both the importer and C&F agent deny any involvement in the illegal activities.

Khaled Hossain Mamun, chairman of Hafiz Trading, said, "We are unsure who used our C&F agent license name to release the consignment of liquor. I have cooperated with customs to identify the perpetrators."

The gang reportedly used the login ID of Mohammad Zakaria, deputy commissioner of Chattogram customs house, to register the consignment in the NBR server (ASYCUDA World System), and that of Revenue Officer Sunia Sarkar Liza to assess the consignment.

Officials explained that authorised access to the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



## Flood damages crops worth Tk 1,844.66cr in Ctg region

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

Crops worth an estimated Tk 1,844.66 crore have been damaged in the recent flash flood in Chattogram region.

Triggered by onrush of upstream water and heavy rains, the floodwaters inundated vast stretches of croplands in different districts of the region.

According to an assessment by the Department of Agricultural Extension in Chattogram, at least 2,01,947 hectares of croplands were submerged under water in five districts - Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Feni, Noakhali, and Lakshmipur - damaging crops completely on 85,884 hectares and partially on 1,16,063 hectares of land.

Approximately 3,87,856 tonnes of crops, including Aus paddy, Aman paddy and seedbeds, seasonal vegetables, fruits, ginger, turmeric, sugarcane, and betel leaves, were damaged while 7,04,335 farming families were affected by the flood

in the region, according to the assessment report.

Prices of paddy and rice are likely to soar in local markets as a consequence of the damages sustained from the flood, said experts.

Meanwhile, farmers are passing days amid concerns about how to recover their losses.

According to district-wise statistics, Chattogram district suffered a total loss of Tk 391.86 crore, Noakhali Tk 642.73 crore, Lakshmipur Tk 227.64 crore, Feni Tk 524.48 crore, and Cox's Bazar Tk 55.85 crore.

Sources said the extent of damage to Aman cultivation will likely have a significant impact on local markets.

Farmers now urgently need Aman seeds and saplings, as well as seeds of other crops, and financial assistance for their rehabilitation and to resume cultivation to prevent any adverse effect on the market.

Contacted, Md Nasir Uddin,

additional director of DAE in Chattogram, said, "After the water receded, the extent of damage to crops has become visible. We have submitted the final assessment report on flood damage to the concerned ministry. Now, the ministry will decide on how to rehabilitate the farmers and provide compensation for their losses."

Md Ekram Uddin, deputy director of DAE in Feni, said floodwater is yet to recede from a significant portion of croplands in the district, and urgent repairs to the damaged embankments and Musapur flood-gate are necessary to this end as upstream waters from Muhuri and Silonia rivers keep breaching those and inundating lands.

He urged Bangladesh Water Development Board to take prompt steps to repair the damaged infrastructures.

"Once the floodwaters recede from croplands completely, steps will be taken to rehabilitate farmers," he added.

## Jhenaidah-1 MP Nayeb Ali arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

Rapid Action Battalion arrested former Jhenaidah-1 lawmaker Nayeb Ali Joarder during a raid in the district's Sadar upazila on Thursday night.

A team of Rab-6 arrested him as he was accused in a case filed over attack, vandalism, and torching during the mass uprising on August 4, said an official of Rab's legal and media wing.

Nayeb was elected unopposed in the by-polls after the constituency fell vacant as lawmaker Abdul Hye died in March.

## Man held with gold worth over Tk 1.6cr

UNB, Satkhira

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh detained a smuggler along with 11 gold bars in Satkhira's at Bhomra Lakshidari border area on Thursday night. The detainee is Zakir Hossain, 31, of Bhomra union.

Acting on tip-off, a team of BGB-33 conducted a drive and arrested Zakir while he was trying to smuggle the gold into India, said Captain Ashraf Haque.

He said the gold bars were found wrapped in a towel around Zakir's waist. They weigh around 1.5 kg. The estimated market value of this gold is Tk 1,60,70,528. A case was filed with Satkhira Sadar Police Station.

## Woman found dead at home in Khulna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The body of a 65-year-old woman was recovered from her house in Rupsha upazila of Khulna yesterday.

The deceased, Syeda Gulfar Nahar Setara, was a resident of the Noihati Godown Mor area.

Her only son resides in Dhaka and she had been living alone since the passing of her husband around four months ago.

Alamgir Hossain Sharabon, a member of Noihati Union Parishad, said when Setara's house help arrived at the house in the morning, she found the front entrance locked.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## CCC to build underpass with escalator at Bahaddarhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Chattogram City Corporation has initiated construction of an escalator-equipped underpass at the port city's Bahaddarhat intersection at a cost of Tk 12 crore.

The underpass will allow pedestrians cross the busy intersection safely.

According to sources at CCC's engineering department, the underpass will be 41.2 metre in length, 10 metre in width and four metre high, with a staircase and an escalator on each of the two sides.

There will be shops inside the underpass on both sides to rehabilitate hawkers, each with 2.75 sq metre of space. The walkway inside the underpass will be 15 feet wide.

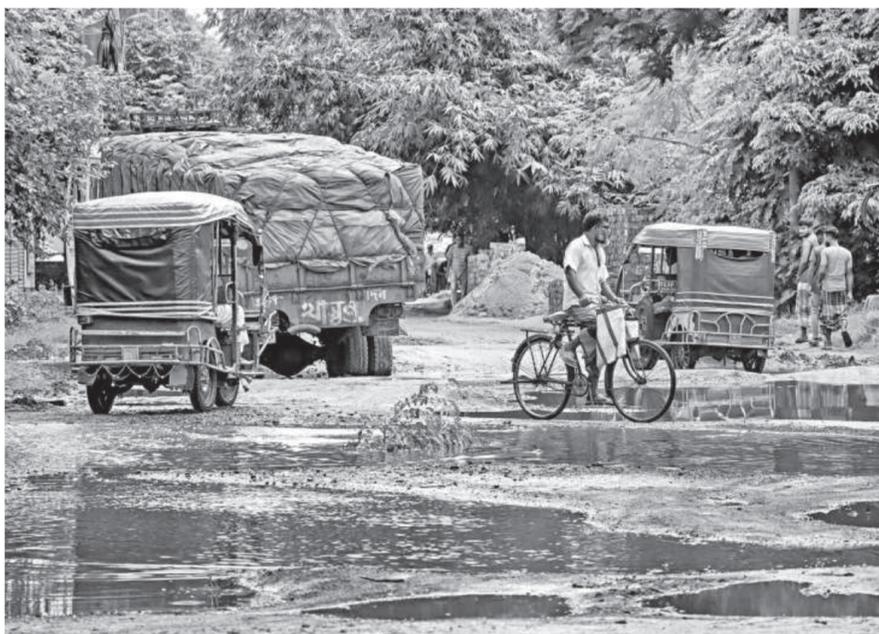
Design Planning and Management Consultants Limited completed the design of the underpass after six months of feasibility study, said the officials.

Contacted, Mozaffar Ali Mamun, engineer of DPM, said, "Around 1,500 people cross the intersection every hour amid risk of accidents, including many patients and elderly individuals. The underpass will ensure their safety while crossing the intersection."

Many locals lauded the initiative. "We face difficulty to cross the wide, busy intersection. We have long been demanding construction of a foot over-bridge at the crossing. The underpass is also a good solution to the problem," said Ahmed Hussain, a resident at Bahaddarhat area.

CCC chief engineer Shahin-ul-Islam Chowdhury said constructing foot bridge at Bahaddarhat intersection is not possible due to a flyover there, so CCC initiated to build an underpass instead.

"Tender was floated in this regard in April and we are now evaluating the tenders that have been submitted. The construction will begin soon," he added.



## Unrepaired road, immense sufferings

Work for Kuet approach road drags on

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Delay in renovation of a road connecting Khulna University of Engineering and Technology and several other institutions has resulted in immense sufferings to the city residents.

The road is an important thoroughfare in the city, with thousands of city dwellers including students, teachers, office-goers using it for their daily commute.

The Tk 22.84 crore project to renovate the 1,185-metre road from Phulbari Gate to Govt Laboratory High School on Khulna-Jashore highway, jointly financed by Bangladesh government and Asian Development Bank, is being implemented by Khulna City Corporation, jointly supervised by Local Government Engineering Department and Khulna Development Authority.

Former KCC mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque inaugurated the project on January 12, 2023, slated to be completed by January 26 this year.

However, even eight months past the stipulated deadline, the contractor firm

Mahub Brothers Pvt Ltd is yet to begin the renovation of the road.

Over the past 20 months since the project began, only 60 percent of the drainage work has been completed, while the road has been left dug along the entire stretch for installing gas, Wasa pipeline, telephone and electric connections.

Visiting the site recently, this correspondent saw the road muddy and waterlogged in many places, rendering it largely unfit for use by pedestrians and vehicles.

"It has been a miserable situation this monsoon as the road became impassable due to the digging and waterlogging. My two sons, who are students of Govt Laboratory High School, are compelled to use the road amid risk to attend school daily," said Toriql Islam, a resident of Phulbari Gate area.

Aklima Khatun, a student of Khulna Women's Technical Training Centre, echoed him.

Md Mizanur Rahman, headteacher of Pratibhamoyee Pre Cadet School,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

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Memo No: 46.02.3300.000.07.001.24-2531

Date: 12-09-2024

e-Tender Notice No: 09/2024-25

e-Tenders are invited on the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following work under Gazipur District.

| SL No | Tender ID & Package No                         | Name of works   | Tendering Method | Tender/ Proposal Document last selling & Security Submission Date and Time: | Tender/ Proposal Closing & Opening Date and Time: |
|-------|--|---|------------------|---|---|
| 01    | 1014315 & CAFDRIRP/Gazipur/ER/UNR/W-34/2024-25 | Rehabilitation of Razabari GC - Chandpur Union HQ Road from Ch: 00m - 5630m Under Kapasia Upazila, District: Gazipur. (Road ID No: 333363019) | (OSTETM)         | 14-Oct-2024 12:00 & 14-Oct-2024 13:00                                       | 14-Oct-2024 & 14:00                               |

This is online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Document from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's branch.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)) (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

(Mohammad Shahjahan Ali)  
Executive Engineer  
LGED, Gazipur.  
email: xen.gazipur@lged.gov.bd

## LONG-RANGE WEAPONS FOR UKRAINE

### West weighing moves defying Putin's threat

AFP, Washington

The leaders of Britain and the United States was set to meet in Washington on whether to let Kyiv fire Western-provided long-range missiles into Russia, an option that has sent tensions soaring with Moscow.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's visit to President Joe Biden comes with Kyiv pushing for permission and Russia warning that giving Ukraine the green light would mean Nato was "at war" with Moscow.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said President Vladimir Putin's warning was unambiguous: "We have no doubt that this statement has reached its recipients."

British media reported that Biden, who is wary of provoking a nuclear conflict, was ready to let Ukraine deploy British and French missiles using US technology but not US-made missiles themselves.

Responding to Putin's warning, Starmer told UK media travelling with him that "Russia started this conflict. Russia illegally invaded Ukraine. Russia can end this conflict straight away."

In a sign of increasing tensions, Russia's FSB security service yesterday announced that the accreditation of six British diplomats had been withdrawn and accused them of spying.

But London dismissed the claims as "completely baseless" and indicated they were a tit-for-tat measure after it slapped new restrictions on Russian diplomats in May.

The talks come at a time when Biden is on his way out of office and November's US election is a toss up between Democrat Kamala Harris and Republican Donald Trump.

Trump repeatedly refused to take sides on the war during a debate with Harris on Tuesday, saying only: "I want the war to stop."

Starmer is set to meet Biden in the Oval Office at 4:30pm (2030 GMT) but has no scheduled meetings at this stage with Trump or Harris, both of whom will be on the campaign trail on Friday.

His visit — his second to Washington since his Labour party stormed to victory in July after 14 years — is also aimed at papering over differences on the war in Gaza.

Washington currently authorises Ukraine to only hit Russian targets in the occupied parts of Ukraine and some in Russian border regions directly related to Moscow's combat operations.



Residents are helped through high flood waters by police in Pynmana town in Myanmar's Naypyidaw region yesterday, following heavy rains in the aftermath of Typhoon Yagi.

PHOTO: AFP

## ANNUAL SECURITY FORUM IN BEIJING

### China, Russia chide West

Beijing's defence minister urges negotiations to end Ukraine, Gaza wars

#### AGENCIES

Chinese and Russian defence officials took swipes at the West at a military diplomacy forum in Beijing on Friday, with China courting the Global South and Russia saying the United States was shifting military conflicts to the Asia-Pacific.

Chinese Defence Minister Dong Jun told the annual Xiangshan Forum that Beijing would enhance military ties with its neighbours and with developing countries in particular.

"Major countries must take the lead in safeguarding global security, abandon a zero-sum mindset and refrain from bullying the small and the weak," Dong said in a veiled criticism of the United States, which he did not name.

Communications between the US and Chinese militaries have eased despite tensions over the South China Sea, Taiwan and Washington's concerns at Beijing's close relationship with Russia, which is at war in Ukraine.

Frictions were underscored by Germany's defence minister confirming that two German warships had sailed through the Taiwan Strait yesterday, the first such transit in two decades and a move condemned by China.

Dong also said that "negotiation" was

the only solution to conflicts such as the wars in Gaza and Ukraine as he addressed a global gathering of military officials in Beijing.

Top military representatives from Russia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Singapore, Iran and Germany are among more than 500 delegates in Beijing for the Xiangshan Forum, dubbed China's answer to the annual Shangri-La meeting in Singapore.



China says US should refrain from bullying the small and the weak

Russia says US shifting military conflicts to the Asia-Pacific

Dong told the opening ceremony: "To resolve hotspot issues such as the crisis in Ukraine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, promoting peace and negotiation is the only way out." "There is no winner in war and conflict, and confrontation leads nowhere," Dong said.

Russian deputy defence minister Alexander Fomin said during the forum that the US was trying to contain China and Russia while preparing for war in Asia by creating new security blocs.

"Russia and China support the creation of a just, multipolar world order based on equality and mutual respect," he said.

Beijing is promoting itself as a responsible player in global conflicts, despite difficulties in its own backyard. This year's forum is themed "Promoting Peace for a Shared Future".

Some diplomats and analysts are watching for signs of further progress in the military relationship between the US and China on the fringes of the conference. The US is represented by Michael Chase, deputy assistant secretary of defence for China, Taiwan and Mongolia.

Chase will head a U.S. delegation for talks with Chinese military counterparts after the forum — building on defence coordination talks in Hawaii that resumed in January for the first time since September 2021, the Pentagon said.

US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan met Zhang Youxia, vice-chairman of China's commanding Central Military Commission, in Beijing last month and U.S. and Chinese theatre-level commanders this week held their first conference call.

## AFTERMATH OF TYPHOON YAGI

### Myanmar battles floods as toll spikes

AFP, Pynmana

Hundreds of villagers in Myanmar waded or swam through chin-high waters, fleeing severe floods around the remote capital Naypyidaw yesterday, while Vietnam began clearing up after deadly Typhoon Yagi.

People in parts of Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar have been battling floods and landslides in the wake of Typhoon Yagi, which dumped a colossal deluge of rain when it hit the region last weekend.

The overall death toll across the four countries stands at nearly 300, including 233 in Vietnam, but with many people missing it is expected to rise.

More than 235,000 people have been forced from their homes in Myanmar, the junta said yesterday.

Authorities were investigating unconfirmed reports that dozens of migrant workers were missing following landslides in a gold mining area in Mandalay region.

The junta gave a death toll Friday of 33, while earlier in the day the country's fire department said rescuers had recovered 36 bodies.

In the Vietnamese capital Hanoi, residents equipped with shovels, brushes and hoses were out clearing up debris and mud after the waters that had submerged parts of the city receded — and the sun came out for the first time in days.

Northern Thailand was also badly affected, with one district on the Myanmar border reporting its worst floods in 80 years.

## Adani Group denies Hindenburg claims on Swiss probe

AFP, Mumbai

India's Adani Group has denied involvement in a money laundering and securities fraud probe that reportedly saw the freezing of more than \$310 million in funds stowed in Swiss bank accounts.

US short-seller Hindenburg Research, a longtime critic of the Indian conglomerate, cited court records reported on by Swiss media outlet Gotham City in making the claim on X on Thursday night.

"Swiss authorities have frozen more than \$310 million in funds across multiple Swiss bank accounts as part of a money laundering and securities forgery investigation into Adani," Hindenburg said.

The firm added that prosecutors in the case had established that an "Adani frontman" channelled funds through the British Virgin Islands, Mauritius and Bermuda — nations known as popular intermediaries for opaque financial transactions — to invest in Adani stocks.

Adani Group quickly rejected the allegations, calling them "preposterous" and "baseless".

"The Swiss court has neither mentioned our group companies, nor have we received any requests for clarification or information from any such authority or regulatory body," it said in a statement.

The back-and-forth is the latest in a long-running battle between Hindenburg and the family-run Indian industrial behemoth, which has interests ranging from mining and power generation to ports and media.

## Bid to destroy unity

FROM PAGE 12

widespread repression and torture. Mushfiqul Fazal Ansari is one of them."

Currently based in Washington, DC, Mushfiqul continues his work as the White House and United Nations correspondent for JustNewsBD.

He also serves as the executive director of the human rights organisation, Right to Freedom, and the executive editor of South Asia Perspectives, a foreign policy magazine.

He served as assistant press secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia from 2001 to 2006 and held notable positions in various media outlets in Bangladesh, including The Daily Ittefaq and UNB.

## India SC grants bail

FROM PAGE 12

related to the same policy.

Kejriwal, 55, and AAP deny the allegations and say the cases are "politically motivated".

Ordering Kejriwal's release, Justice Surya Kant said that the issue related to "liberty" and "prolonged incarceration" could not be justified.

The two-judge bench was split, however, on Kejriwal's appeal challenging his arrest, with Kant holding it lawful while Justice Ujjal Bhuyan said the timing raised serious questions.

The federal police "must not only be above board but must also be seen to remain so ... in a functional democracy governed by the rule of law, perception matters," Bhuyan said.

In its first reaction following the verdict, AAP said, "Truth can be troubled, but not defeated".

Opposition parties have been demanding Kejriwal's release, saying his arrest was an attempt by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to deny them a level playing field in the polls, charges denied by Modi and BJP.

Other countries, including the US, had urged a "fair" and impartial trial. BJP yesterday said bail to Kejriwal did not mean he was innocent.

## US must intervene to stop

FROM PAGE 12

"We must absolutely reject any prospective annexation of West Bank or the land grabbing or the illegal settlements that move on. The West Bank together with Gaza and East Jerusalem, which is part of the West Bank, must be the state of Palestine in the future," he added.

Meanwhile, one of two US aircraft carrier strike groups deployed to the Middle East in part to deter Iran from carrying out a threatened attack against Israel has departed the region, the Pentagon said on Thursday.

The decision to end the dual-carrier presence came nearly three weeks after US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered the Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group to remain in the Middle East, even after the arrival of the Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group to replace it.

The Roosevelt has now departed the Middle East and is headed to the Asia-Pacific region, Major General Patrick Ryder, a Pentagon spokesperson, told a news briefing.

In West Bank, the families of

Palestinians killed in an air strike in the occupied West Bank city of Tubas held funerals yesterday after Israeli forces withdrew following their latest raid in the territory.

The Israeli military said in a statement on Wednesday that its forces were engaged in a "counter-terrorism operation" in the area of Tubas, in the northern West Bank.

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa said the military withdrew Thursday evening, allowing the funerals to go ahead.

The four men buried in Tubas yesterday were killed in an air strike at dawn on Wednesday, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society said.

A fifth fatality from the same strike was buried on Friday in Tamoun, also in the northern West Bank.

Since the Israeli offensive in Gaza began on October, more than 41,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces. It also wounded more than 92,000 people.

According to the Palestinian health ministry, at least 679 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank by the Israeli military or settlers since October 7.

## Swechchhasebak Dal leader killed in attack by 'AL men'

FROM PAGE 12

and brought the situation under control around 6:00pm. Several shops were also vandalised during the incident, he said.

He added that Didar's body was recovered from the Charpatalia area around 7:30pm.

Sikdar Shahidul Islam Lelin, president of Gopalganj Sadar BNP, said, "We were on our way to Tungipara to visit the graves of SM Jilani's parents when Awami League men attacked us."

He added that the attackers were led by Gopalganj municipality councillor Amin Mollah and Gobra

Union AL President Alimuzzaman.

Contacted, Alimuzzaman said when the motorcade was passing through the Ghonapara area, the BNP activists tore down banners bearing pictures of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

"When we protested, the BNP men attacked us. Several Awami League activists, including myself, were injured," he added.

Jibitesh Biswas, superintendent of Gopalganj 250-Bed General Hospital, said 21 people were admitted there and four were referred to Dhaka for better treatment.

## China signs finance co-op deal with debt distressed Maldives

REUTERS, Beijing

China's central bank on Friday said it had signed an agreement with the Maldivian authorities to strengthen trade and investment, as the debt-distressed Indian Ocean nation strives to avoid default.

The People's Bank of China and the Maldivian Ministry of Economic Development and Trade signed a memorandum of understanding to boost local currency settlement for current account transactions and direct investment, a statement from the People's Bank of China said, giving no further details.

## Shrine

FROM PAGE 12

There is an orphanage on the shrine's premises, he said.

Only helpless people were assisted with the money raised by the shrine, Zakir said.

Langta Kabir, head of the shrine, said, "I'm leaving the shrine as it has been vandalised."

He was seen leaving the place along with three others.

Mustafizur Rahman, OC of Gazipur Sadar Police Station, said he heard that the shrine was vandalised.

Teams of army and Rapid Action Battalion reached the scene around 4:30pm.

## Drop names

FROM PAGE 12

"Though such directives were in the CrPC and service rules, these were issued to ensure that no one is subjected to harassment."

The directives follow criticism of the police over the filing of "arbitrary cases" against journalists and other people.

The letter has been sent to police stations across the country, asking the officers-in-charge to inform the Police Headquarters via mail on actions taken in response to the directives by September 22.

## At least 875 killed

FROM PAGE 12

journalists, and 41 were people from other professions.

Analysing the causes of deaths of 772 people, the HRSS revealed that 77 percent of them were shot dead.

The report states that at least 599 were shot dead, 61 burnt to death, 85 beaten to death, and 27 were killed by other means.

It stated that most of the victims, approximately 77 percent, were killed

by police. Information was available for 541 victims. Of them, 419 were killed by police, 45 by other law enforcement agencies, 44 by Awami League members, and 33 were killed in mob attacks.

The report shows that out of 875 killings, 540 occurred in Dhaka division, 91 in Chattogram, 81 in Khulna, 64 in Rajshahi, 38 in Mymensingh, 29 in Rangpur, 20 in Sylhet, and 13 in Barishal division.

## 'Comrade Kamala'

FROM PAGE 12

tactic called "red baiting," which aims to discredit an opponent by accusing them of not being a capitalist.

The strategy involves labelling an opponent as a "communist," "socialist," "Marxist," or a "red," said Barbara Perry, a presidential studies professor at the University of Virginia.

It is "an attempt not only to denigrate them, but also to get them to fight back and maybe present themselves in a not very nice way," she added.

Perry said the terms were "very weighted" in the United States, and invoke the repeated "red scares" of the era following the two world wars, when Washington was competing with the Soviet Union for dominance.

"The country tends to turn inward at those times" of competition with a rival ideology, she said.

The most well-known example of the "red scare" phenomenon was practiced by US Senator Joseph McCarthy, the chief "red baiter and the witch hunter in the Senate," Perry said.

A fervent anti-communist, McCarthy warned of the supposed infiltration of communists into every stratum of American society, creating a widespread climate of paranoia across the country.

"Red baiting also has this... long history in the US, and it's kind of interesting to see it sort of come back," said Zeitzoff.

He also identified a common thread running between McCarthy and Trump: a lawyer named Roy Cohn.

Cohn was an advisor to McCarthy, and in the 1970s became a mentor to the real estate magnate and future president of the United States, Trump.

Harris only became the Democratic Party's presidential candidate in July, after President Joe Biden dramatically dropped out of the race following a disastrous debate performance against Trump.

With voters having a limited time to get to know the vice president, Trump has attempted to influence their image by repeatedly characterizing her as a communist.

To explain why Trump has done this, both Zeitzoff and Perry use the same metaphor: that of throwing spaghetti against the wall and seeing what sticks.

Trump appears to be trying to attract a certain type of voters by calling Harris a "Marxist," said Zeitzoff, particularly Hispanic and Latino Americans.

Many voters from that background may have come from families that fled communist countries and therefore have unfavorable views of them.

Trump is also targeting another demographic with this rhetoric: older voters.

"There will be some people in the electorate who are remembering, as I can... the height of the Cold War," Perry said.

# Sumi embodies generosity, defiance

SHARMIN JOYA

During the second wave of quota reform protests this year, young actress Shahnaz Sumi became actively involved as a student of the Government College of Applied Human Science, starting in the first week of July. In an interview with The Daily Star, she shared her perspective on the protests, the challenges facing the showbiz industry, and her hopes for the future.

"Convincing my classmates to boycott classes and join the protests was difficult at first," Sumi recalled. "But eventually, we took to the streets because the demand for quota reform was justified. Despite our determination, many of the girls

felt compelled to act after witnessing innocent people being killed. To shield her family from worry, she kept her involvement in the protests a secret, ensuring they remained unaware of her participation. "After July 19, things got worse. It became difficult to leave the house. Even if we did go out, we used basic button phones to avoid harassment. Most girls stayed in safe places, but they were still afraid of being physically assaulted."

The period leading up to and following August 5 was fraught with uncertainty. Although many artistes eventually joined the student protests to stand against the violence and injustice, they were late in the game. "Even on the morning of August 5, we didn't know what to expect," Sumi reflected. As a dedicated student activist, she chose not to join the artistes in their protest. "It felt like they joined a bit too late. The only person from the industry who checked on me was Siam bhaia (Siam Ahmed)."

Amid the unfolding events, it

23-year-old actress, a student in the Department of Child Development and Social Relationships, shared her thoughts: "I believe there are two key points to consider. First, in a densely populated country like ours, it's unrealistic for a single Chief Advisor to address everyone's daily needs. Instead, we should focus on supporting those around us without expecting anything in return. As human beings,

**Sumi also called on the industry to support those financially struggling during the crisis, especially crew members who were finding it increasingly difficult to survive due to a lack of work. She believes that by helping them, the artistes can atone for their past actions and seek forgiveness.**

emerged that some artistes had a WhatsApp group where 160 screenshots revealed disturbing conspiracies against those who supported the students. Regarding this, Sumi firmly stated, "The truth will come out, no matter what. Many in that group revealed their true intentions. Now, if they feel bullied, harassed, or unsafe, they should have thought about those who experienced the same before August 5 for supporting the movement."

Sumi also called on the industry to support those financially struggling during the crisis, especially crew members who were finding it increasingly difficult to survive due to a lack of work. She believes that by helping them, the artistes can atone for their past actions and seek forgiveness.

In this critical time for the country, the

were hesitant, constantly threatened by the former ruling party's student wing, which still had influence on our campus. I still have a voice recording sent by members of the BCL (Bangladesh Chhatra League) to the general students' group, where they used abusive language against us for supporting the movement."

Sumi herself faced threats, and her family's concern for her safety only added to the pressure. Nevertheless, she and her classmates



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

## OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



**Screening of "We Feed People"**  
September 17 | 3pm  
EMK Centre



**Concert "Gonojowar"**  
September 18 | 3pm  
Hatirjheel Amphitheatre



**One True Sound with Miftah Zaman**  
September 20 | 6pm  
Yamaha Music Store, Tejgaon

## TRENDY STREAMS

**Netflix**  
The Perfect Couple



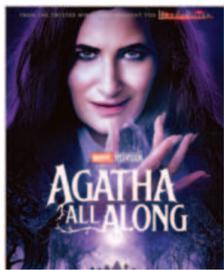
**Prime Video**  
The Grand Tour



**Hulu**  
How to Die Alone



**Disney Plus**  
Agatha All Along



**Chorki**  
Forget Me Not



## 1-MINUTE REVIEW

### 'KALKI 2898 AD'

Indian mythology and sci-fi collide in promising film

*Kalki 2898 AD*, the lively Telugu-language film blends Indian mythology, martial arts, and Bollywood style dance, romance, and melodrama—all viewed through a sci-fi lens, which makes it both fascinating and fun.

The Nag Ashwin directorial begins when the warrior Ashwatthama (played by Amitabh Bachchan) is cursed by Krishna for attempting to kill an unborn child. Condemned to immortality, he must atone by rescuing a future incarnation of Vishnu's 10th and final avatar.

The plot then shifts to the year 2898, where Earth is a dystopian wasteland. The

remaining city, Kasi, consists of a slum and a massive floating pyramid called the Complex — ruled by the crude Supreme Yaskin (Kamal Haasan).

Key characters also emerge as the world unfolds, including Bhairava (Prabhas), a comical mercenary seeking redemption. He and other vested parties pursue Sum-80 (Deepika Padukone), a fugitive who is later confirmed to be carrying Vishnu's 10th avatar.

However, as it is simply the first instalment in an extensive cinematic universe awaiting more movies, the aptly expensive-looking and dystopic *Kalki 2898 AD* is a good start.



## WHAT'S PLAYING

### One More Light

*One More Light* by Linkin Park is a poignant ballad that showcases the band's versatility beyond their nu-metal roots. Released in 2017, it serves as the title track of their final album with Chester Bennington. The song's stripped-back instrumentation, featuring gentle piano and subtle electronic elements, creates an intimate atmosphere that allows Bennington's emotive vocals to shine.

Lyricaly, the track explores themes of loss, empathy, and the value of human life. Its message resonates deeply, especially in light of Bennington's tragic passing shortly after the album's release.

While some fans were initially surprised by the song's softer sound, *One More Light* has ultimately become a touching tribute to Bennington's legacy.



WHAT'S ON THE GRAM  
**KIM SEON-HO**

Kim Seon-Ho, who captivated hearts with his unforgettable portrayal of the warm and endearing Hong Du-sik in the slice-of-life K-Drama *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha*, continues to charm every step of his journey.

His gentle smile and genuine warmth breathed life into the character, leaving an indelible mark on fans. Recently, the actor graced the cover of *Vogue Korea*, unveiling a more delicate and introspective facet of his persona.

In the striking photoshoot, Kim Seon-Ho embraces serene elegance, dressed in a refined long beige trench coat paired with a matching scarf draped effortlessly around his neck. Completing the look with dark brown loafers, he exudes timeless sophistication.

It is his tender gesture of caressing a vibrant yellow flower that truly steals the scene — with his eyes gently closed, he embraces the flower's beauty, capturing a moment of soft vulnerability.

## The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

### Bring back normalcy in RMG sector

#### Understand and act to calm the frustrations in industrial belts

We are gravely concerned about the ongoing unrest in our RMG industry as workers continue to protest in Ashulia, Zirabo, Savar and Gazipur over payment of arrears, better pay, job regularisation, increase of allowances and benefits, etc. According to the BGMEA, on September 12 alone, 219 garment factories in Gazipur and Ashulia were closed down due to workers' protests. Reportedly, in many areas, the protests took a turn for the worse as a result of unresolved negotiations with factory owners over their demands. Workers allegedly vandalised many factories; some of them were also set on fire. The question is: how has the situation come to this point?

According to industry insiders as well as some labour leaders, outsiders and political elements are trying to instigate the workers. It is imperative that, under the circumstances, a proper investigation is conducted immediately to identify the external factors responsible for the vandalism and destruction of properties. Owners have also pointed out that the industrial police are yet to start functioning fully in the industrial belts since the Hasina government was ousted around six weeks ago, fuelling safety concerns. This prolonged state of insecurity must be addressed by the interim government urgently, and the role of the industrial police—who have been used by successive governments to quell workers' protests—must also be re-evaluated to restore trust in the force.

Even if the allegations of external forces trying to create instability in the sector are true, we need to understand and address the underlying frustrations of the workers. During the 15 years of Awami League rule, we saw how the workers' legitimate demands were routinely disregarded. Last year, when the workers demanded Tk 23,000-25,000 as their monthly minimum wage, the government fixed it at Tk 12,500 in compliance with the proposal made by RMG factory owners. Sadly, many owners are still depriving their workers of their dues and aggravating an already volatile situation. Meanwhile, RMG factories are yet to institute an equitable mechanism for negotiations between workers and owners. Such practices must come to an end and workers' grievances must be properly addressed.

As production in a lot of factories remains suspended, there are concerns among the owners about financial losses they might incur, which will eventually affect our economy and the workers at large. There are, in fact, real reasons to worry as the disruption in production has already led many international buyers to cancel their trips to the country to finalise work orders for the coming seasons. Under the circumstances, we urge the interim government to act promptly to understand and act on the simmering frustrations on the ground. Its decision to review the workers' wage through the minimum wage board is a step in the right direction. The government also said it would consider inflation and the rising prices of essentials while reviewing the minimum wage, which is only the right thing to do. It also needs to take steps to improve security at the RMG factories, support the manufacturers in need, address the international buyers' concerns, and ensure stability and competitiveness in the sector.

### Will dengue be even more fatal this year?

#### Alarm over dengue outbreak must be taken seriously

It may be a new Bangladesh with countless possibilities, but ordinary citizens are facing the same problems that have been plaguing them for years. We have written countless editorials decrying the inadequate dengue management efforts of the previous government, and we remain concerned that, in the void created by the absence of officials in the city corporations and municipalities in the aftermath of the July uprising, even the usual activities are suspended or have become sporadic at best. As a result, health experts are now warning of a deadlier dengue outbreak than the previous ones.

In Chattogram, for instance, the situation is particularly dire. The fatality rate in the port city now stands at 1.30 percent—more than double the national rate of 0.60 percent—despite the relatively low number of hospital admissions. The Den 2 serotype, identified as a major culprit in previous years, may be playing a significant role in the current outbreak, according to health experts. This particular serotype is known for its higher virulence, making it more likely to lead to severe complications and fatalities.

While the Chattogram City Corporation claims to be conducting regular insecticide spraying and clearing mosquito breeding grounds, residents report inconsistent efforts and inadequate coverage. Despite the severity of dengue over the years and the repeated calls for a comprehensive, scientifically driven and centrally coordinated initiative, we did not see any notable efforts of the past government or the city corporations to effectively address the public health menace. Meanwhile, issues such as inadequate sanitation, poor waste management and unplanned urbanisation have created environments that are conducive to mosquito breeding. These underlying problems require long-term solutions that go beyond short-term mosquito control measures.

While we understand that the interim government has many urgent tasks to deal with, we urge it to take prompt and comprehensive action to address dengue before it becomes a public health emergency and puts an already flailing healthcare system under more strain. In fact, with reforms being promised in every sector, now is the time for Bangladesh to learn from past mistakes and establish a comprehensive vector management system. This system should include year-round mosquito monitoring and surveillance to enable targeted interventions. We also need centralised recording of dengue cases across all healthcare facilities for accurate data analysis, and bolster our healthcare system to deal with dengue cases, especially outside of Dhaka. Ultimately, we need a collaborative effort among the government, city corporations, health authorities and citizens to prevent future dengue outbreaks. By implementing proactive, sustained and integrated measures, Bangladesh can finally, we hope, effectively control the spread of this disease.

# How should Bangladesh deal with Adani's \$800m outstanding bill?



Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb writes on sustainable development and is a public policy critic.

FAIZ AHMAD TAIYEB

The controversy surrounding Adani's Godda power plant has spread in Bangladesh as well as abroad. The Adani Group has reportedly been requesting the interim government of Bangladesh to clear outstanding dues of around \$800 million on their electricity sales. However, given the situation, I believe rather than terminating the Adani contract outright, the Bangladesh government should withhold the payment and commission international experts to conduct a thorough review of the highly controversial agreement with Adani. The current administration is under no obligation to honour agreements made by the ousted government that was elected through a questionable election.

Indian media outlets recently reported two notable stories: the *Times of India* revealed that Adani had written to Bangladesh Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus regarding the \$800 million bill. Another report warned that Bangladesh faces an "unsustainable" \$500 million power debt due to Adani's high electricity prices.

These developments underscore that the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPPDB) was unable to review the original contract with Adani. Under the directive of the authoritarian Hasina regime, the agreement was signed without review, likely to appease India. This pattern is not unprecedented. In the case of the Rampal coal-fired power plant, engineers from the German technology supplier for the project told me that initial drafts of agreements often contain inflated prices, which are typically subject to multiple rounds of negotiations. However, Bangladesh surprised them by signing the draft without any revisions. This incident is emblematic of how the Awami League government has consistently made agreements that went against Bangladesh's interests, contributing to a massive debt in the power sector.

The flaws in the Adani Godda power plant agreement have been widely documented in international media as well. Tim Buckley, a leading energy expert, told *The Washington Post* in 2022 that Bangladesh would pay over five times the country's average wholesale electricity price for power from Adani's plant. Even if coal prices revert to pre-Ukraine war levels, Bangladesh would still be paying 33

percent more for Adani's electricity compared to its domestic coal-based power plants. Buckley described this contract as "an absolute gouge" and questioned how any reasonable person could have signed such a detrimental deal on behalf of Bangladesh.

"And the plant may not even be needed: Bangladesh now has 40 percent more power generation capacity than peak demand, according to government figures, thanks to years of investment in coal- and gas-fired power stations... When compared with that of Bangladesh's Kaptai solar farm, Adani's power could be five times as expensive," Buckley said.



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

*The Washington Post* report said this power agreement initially appears to be "profitable for both Bangladesh and India," but in reality, it is "very less profitable" for Bangladesh.

Buckley further explained that even if the Godda power plant produces no electricity, Bangladesh would still owe Adani approximately \$450 million annually as capacity and maintenance charges. This is considered an exceptionally high figure by global energy standards. A fresh report shows that Adani will receive annual capacity charges of \$473.16 million for the power plant; in 25 years, about \$11.83 billion will be spent on these charges.

In 2019, Australian Green Party MP Bob Brown launched a website called Adani Watch following protests over the controversial activities of Adani's various entities. On February 9, 2023, Adani Watch released a long report on the Godda power plant deal, which shows that under the current agreement, the price Bangladesh has to pay to buy electricity from Godda is almost three times higher than other power plants in India.

Adani has also reportedly exploited this agreement to inflate profits. Despite benefiting from tax exemptions in India, Adani continues to charge higher rates for the power supplied to Bangladesh, withholding information about these exemptions.

Adani has been exempted from duty and all kinds of taxes on coal import for the power plant. Also, the company does not have to pay any kind of Goods and Services Tax (GST), surcharge or any other duty-tax. According to sources, if the power plant runs at full capacity, it will require seven to nine million metric tonnes of coal annually. As a result, Adani is getting \$200 million in duty-

According to Adani Watch, India's union government charges 400 rupees (\$4.88) as Clean Energy Cess (a form of carbon tax) for every tonne of coal. According to the final Environmental Impact Assessment filed by APL to the Ministry of Environment, the plant will consume anywhere between seven and nine million tonnes of coal annually for its proposed PPA period of 25 years. If the figure is taken at eight million tonnes per annum, a back-of-the-envelope calculation produces an estimate that APL will save \$39.02 million per year on the Clean Energy Cess and nearly \$1 billion over 25 years, by virtue of being declared an SEZ. Being in an SEZ, Adani Power (Jharkhand) Ltd will get 100 percent income tax exemption for the first five years, 50 percent for next five years thereafter, and 50 percent of the ploughed back export profit for next five years.

Adani is also accused of price manipulation by purchasing low-grade coal while charging Bangladesh for high-grade prices. This has led to Bangladesh paying at least 30 percent above the international market rates. According to a 2018 IEEFA report, the country will have to spend an additional Tk 70,000 crore over 25 years to buy power from Adani Group.

Given the overwhelming evidence that this contract is detrimental to Bangladesh, I believe it is imperative that the agreement be reviewed rather than immediately cancelled. There is no justification for taking out new foreign loans to pay Adani in full under the current terms. Instead, at most, 25 percent of the outstanding bills should be settled while the review process is underway.

However, if Gautam Adani refuses to renegotiate the terms of the contract, Bangladesh may need to consider political action to terminate the agreement.

This approach is supported by critics within India itself, where opposition leader Rahul Gandhi questioned the contract in parliament, citing the close relationship between Prime Minister Modi's foreign policy and his favouritism toward Adani. Gandhi pointed out that Adani secured the 1,500MW contract shortly after Modi's visit to Bangladesh.

Prominent Indian intellectuals have also criticised the deal, with Paranjy Guha Thakurta stating that Adani's Godda contract has "pushed Bangladesh into a ditch." Al Jazeera reported on the growing international concern, describing Bangladesh as being in the "hot seat" over the Adani power deal.

The existing evidence suggests that Bangladesh has valid grounds to demand a review of the Adani contract. The government must show resolve in protecting national interests, with no reason to fear repercussions for standing firm on an unfair agreement.

## Our youth needs financial literacy



Mahiya Tabassum is a journalist at The Daily Star.

MAHIYA TABASSUM

In an era where financial scandals have become alarmingly commonplace, the importance of financial literacy for our youth cannot be overstated. A Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) report published on August 12 paints a grim picture of our banking sector, revealing that a staggering Tk 92,261 crore was embezzled in 24 major banking scams between 2008 and 2023—more specifically, during the 15-year rule of the Awami League. This amount, equivalent to 12 percent of Bangladesh's national budget for FY2023-24 or two percent of the GDP for FY2022-23, highlights the dire state of our financial institutions. The banking sector, meant to be one of the pillars of our economy, has instead become a house of cards, teetering on the brink of collapse.

Consider the case of BASIC Bank, once a top-rated institution. After Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu was appointed board chairman in 2009, the bank's reputation plummeted. From a mere 4.81 percent of soured loans in December 2009, the bank's defaulted loans skyrocketed to 55 percent of total outstanding loans by March 2023. Despite the Anti-

Corruption Commission (ACC) filing 60 cases related to this scam, Bacchu himself was not named in any lawsuit, highlighting the culture of impunity that plagues our system.

The Hallmark group scandal involving Sonali Bank is another glaring example. Between 2010 and 2012, the bank's Ruposhi Bangla Hotel branch lent an astounding Tk 3,547 crore to Hallmark and five other firms based on fake documents. Both the board and management of Sonali Bank were implicated, yet the bank has recovered little of the swindled funds.

The saga of PK Halder further illustrates the depth of the problem. The former managing director of NRB Global Bank and Reliance Finance Limited fled Bangladesh in 2019 after allegedly syphoning off about Tk 10,200 crore from four non-banking financial institutions. Being a fugitive for two years, he was arrested in India in May 2022, only proving the challenges we face in bringing such criminals to justice.

These high-profile cases are not isolated incidents but symptoms of a systemic rot. The fact that many of the perpetrators remain unpunished only

serves to embolden future wrongdoers.

Beyond these high-profile cases, another threat has been looming on the horizon lately: digital financial crimes. Cybercriminals are increasingly targeting our youth through social media platforms and mobile financial services (MFS). Their tactics range from convincing victims to reveal their NID to organising elaborate engagement programmes in luxurious hotels. These scams not only result in financial losses but also inflict severe psychological trauma on victims, with some cases even leading to suicide.

In this landscape of financial peril, financial literacy emerges as a crucial safeguard. It's not just about understanding banking terms or investment strategies; it's about developing critical thinking skills to detect scams, make informed financial decisions, and manage money responsibly.

In 2022, the Bangladesh Bank took a step in the right direction by issuing financial literacy guidelines to banks and financial institutions. However, if we look at the recent banking scams and the rise of loan defaulters, it is evident that the central bank's guidelines could do little to no help, and it has repeatedly failed to take any action against the financial crimes.

To add to that, statistics present a far more bitter truth. As of December 2023, the financial literacy rate in Bangladesh is only 28 percent, according to the Financial Inclusion Insights (2018) Programme by Intermedia Research. Therefore, unarguably, we need a more comprehensive, nationwide approach to financial education and must do

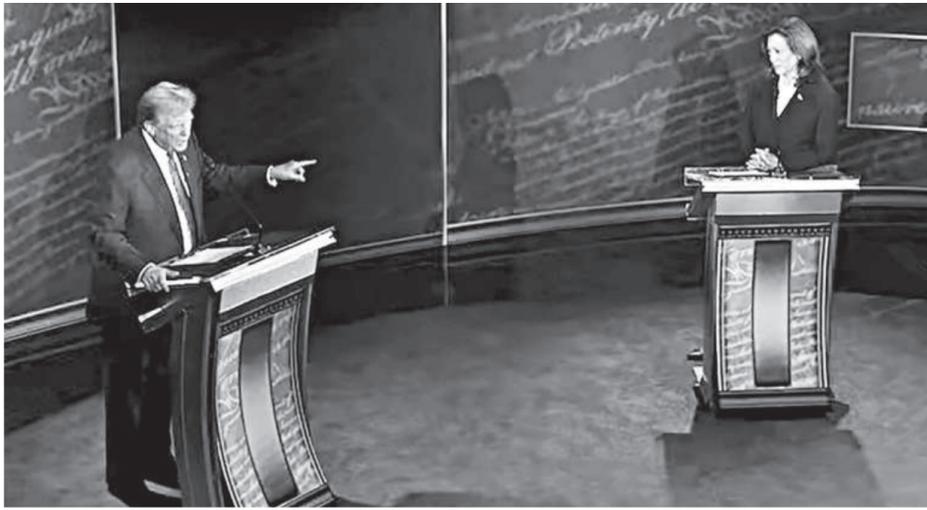
our part as aware, responsible citizens.

First and foremost, financial literacy, covering digital banking as well, should be integrated into our national curriculum. Our youth need to be equipped with the knowledge to navigate the complex world of finance from an early age. This education should not be limited to traditional classroom settings but should also leverage technology to reach a wider audience.

We also need a collaborative effort involving financial institutions, NGOs, universities, and community organisations to offer financial literacy programmes. These initiatives should be inclusive, ensuring that women, people with different educational needs, individuals with disabilities, and those in remote rural areas have access to this crucial knowledge.

Our law enforcement agencies need specialised training to understand and combat digital financial crimes. The government should also establish research bodies dedicated to identifying new scam trends and developing innovative awareness strategies.

The banking scams and digital financial crimes plaguing our country are not just economic issues; they're a threat to our social fabric and our aspirations for a reformed Bangladesh. By prioritising financial literacy, we can arm our youth with the knowledge and skills they need to protect themselves and contribute to a more stable financial future for our nation. Financial literacy is not a luxury; it's a necessity. It's time we treated it as such.



Former US President Donald Trump and Democratic presidential nominee and US Vice-President Kamala Harris during a presidential debate on September 10, 2024. FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

# Kamala rattles Trump, but how much will it matter?



Ashfaque Swapan is a writer and editor based in Atlanta, US.

ASHFAQUE SWAPAN

Democratic Vice-President Kamala Harris locked horns with Republican and former US President Donald Trump in a debate on September 10, peppered by occasional fireworks. Following the debate, a CNN instant poll gave her an almost 2-1 edge.

A note to Democrats: do not uncork the champagne just yet. Just how much the debate performance will matter in the November presidential election is quite another question.

For starters, a huge swathe of the US voting public tends to give these debates a pass, and who can blame them? Substantial parts tend to be soporific, as candidates wriggle out of tough questions and often prefer the comfort of opaque platitudes.

The interesting thing about US political debates is that they are more significant when a participant makes a big mistake.

Take the first televised presidential debate in 1960 between Republican nominee Vice-President Richard Nixon and Democratic candidate Senator John F. Kennedy. Kennedy looked impressive on television. Nixon, on the other hand, looked tired, with a five o'clock shadow on his face. TV watchers said Kennedy won the debate, yet radio listeners thought Nixon won. In reality, Kennedy won that election by a whisker. Just this year, US President Joe Biden made such an unholy mess of his debate with Trump that he had to bow out of the presidential race.

Harris and Trump are very different candidates. Harris is more of a typical US candidate, brimming with enthusiasm and ever-ready to regale listeners with the pabulum of US exceptionalism. Lately, she has improved her performance and appeared sharp in the debate. She was nimble in marshalling facts and arguments, though not as quick to call out Trump's lies as her supporters would have liked. Her attempt to

needle Trump by talking about folks leaving his rallies was a masterstroke—and it worked.

Trump is something else again. As a political animal, he is *sui generis* in the US, perhaps in the world. His true calling might well have been to be a carnival barker (unkind critics may say a used-car salesman). For Trump, the goal is to sell—in this case, himself—and like the ultimate salesman that he is, he feels utterly unencumbered by such niceties as facts and truth.

Untethered from reality, Trump's lies came tumbling thick and fast like water gushing out of a fire hydrant: there was no inflation during his presidency, millions of illegal criminals are entering the US raising crime there and lowering crime outside the US, Trump rebuilt the military, crime in the US is going through the roof, etc. To be sure, Harris made false statements too, but they were much fewer and far between.

I saved Trump's most delightful morsel until now. Trump claimed—I kid you not—that undocumented immigrants in a small town in Ohio were catching dogs and cats and eating them. Not only is there no evidence of this, but true to Trumpian form, it is also unconsciously racist. The immigrants are Haitian.

I reacted with shock. Had US political debate reached such a nadir where a candidate can get away with this?

Well, Trump can. Such is Trump's Svengali-like grasp on his supporters that he has created a separate right-wing ecosystem where an alternate reality exists. His outré remarks and conduct are baked into public opinion, and his core supporters are unfazed.

This is why I am not sure how much Kamala Harris will benefit from this debate, electorally speaking, despite her impressive performance. Remember, in 2016, polls suggested former US Secretary of State Hillary

Clinton won all debates handily when she ran against Trump. A fat lot of good it did her come November.

Trump's mannerisms are right out of vaudeville, his vocabulary that of an irate high school juvenile delinquent. He says whatever comes to his mind. But analysts dismiss him at their peril. He has an uncanny feel for the pulse of the nation's disaffected.

Take his stance on abortion. He has been twisting himself into a pretzel trying to wriggle out of the abortion debate, because he instinctively senses that the broader public—even many Republicans—are not where the Republican Party and its passionate anti-abortion activists stand on the issue.

On foreign policy, while Harris backs Ukraine unconditionally, I feel Trump's stand on wanting to end the war may resonate with a substantial part of the voting public in the rural hinterland, which is tired of billions of dollars going down another boondoggle.

Harris faces an uphill task also because the US presidential election system favours Republicans. Instead of a popular vote, candidates must win state by state. Most states are overwhelmingly Democratic (California, New York) or Republican (Texas, Louisiana), so the battle comes down to a handful of competitive states.

The city where the debate happened—Philadelphia—is in one such battleground state, Pennsylvania. Analysts say that the road to the White House goes through Pennsylvania. That's a challenge for Democrats. Areas around Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are Democratic, but the rest of the state is rural and deeply conservative.

Americans need to feel comfortable with the president. Analysts often say it's almost as if American voters ask themselves if they would like to have a beer with the candidate.

Are Americans ready to elect an African-South Asian American woman as a president? It is true that once they stunned the world and elected America's first African American president, but there has been a substantial backlash after that.

Most of rural America, I worry, is not ready either to buy Kamala Harris a beer or elect her president. Goodness knows I would like to be proven wrong.

## MASS WEDDING AT DU A new kind of 'taboo-breaking'



BLOWN IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

I thought it was a joke, one of those social media pranks. But when mainstream media picked it up, the reality struck: students at my university are organising mass wedding ceremonies on September 20. The poster proclaims that the event commemorates Liberation 2.0, hoping that the initiative will break down the "taboos" associated with marriage. The provosts of the concerned residential halls, however, are quick to deny any link between

for the students' safety and to protect their roommates from unnecessary hassles. The hall authority required new students to sign an undertaking, committing them to inform the hall authority of any changes in their marital status and to vacate the hall if they became pregnant. The High Court challenged the issue and overturned the clause, and Dhaka University revoked the decision in 2021. The same happened with Jagannath University in 2023.

and create your own norms. The retail version of individualised and personalised opinions replaces wholesale convictions. A similar concept can be utilised to comprehend this mass wedding. Universities cannot segregate education in terms of gender. However, orthodox religious beliefs prohibit a system that could transform a smile or flirtation into something more serious. The mass wedding will institutionalise such unions. Maybe I am overthinking. The whole thing can turn out to be a joke. Alternatively, it could serve as a test for alkaline or acidic elements on campus, with the expectation that the chemical reaction will help us detect pink or blue. The chemical reagents are known; the outcome is unknown.

During the parley, the student raised another important issue. Can we refer to a collective demand as "mob justice" if we are familiar with all the individuals involved in the process? Sure enough, we know the students who asked for disciplinary action against those who supported the previous regime or participated in direct or indirect violence. These familiar faces have presented us with a list of legitimate demands. Are they mobs? Interestingly, mob justice refers to a situation that exerts pressure to yield results in its favour. The focus is on action, not actors. I remember teaching my students Freud's idea of the uncanny, where the unhomely become home; the strange becomes familiar. The post-ideological world, which became popular after the publication of Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), signals the death of all dominant ideological frameworks. The vacuum will cause cultural, social, and political life to become more fragmented, with various groups and individuals pursuing their own interests without a unifying vision.

There is much to learn from this Generation Z as they navigate through these fragments. Some of them are standing on pillars of faith that appear like apparitions. Their arguments are both familiar

this celebration of collective uprising and the mass marriage initiative. They are unaware of the nuptials taking place under their roofs.

The calculus of knowing and unknowing defines the taboo that is planned to be "broken" through this tying of the knots. The known poster is merely the tip of the iceberg, surrounded by unknown columns. Marriage is not taboo. As we delve into the plethora of comments underlying the news, it becomes evident that those supporting the actualisation of romantic relationships on campus welcome them on religious grounds. We have previously heard of mass weddings without dowries taking place during the annual Ijtema prayers, but the idea of hosting such an event at the apex academic

The mass wedding has brought to light the issue of housing for married students at public universities. Perhaps the reformed scheme could allow married students to rent a limited number of on-campus flats, given their inability to live in traditional dormitories. This can be especially beneficial for graduate and postgraduate researchers who must continue their education well into their late 20s and early 30s. Indeed, we need to discuss this less-talked-about issue to find a solution.

We are preparing a roadmap to resume regular academic activities. Currently, we are engaged in a series of dialogues aimed at resolving the issues that prevented us from returning to classes after the sudden shutdown that overthrew a



VISUAL: STAR

institution of the country is new. I assume someone took the wordplay on BA *Shomman* (BA Honours) quite literally to pursue "biye with dignity." One hopes that these consensual adults will engage in holy matrimony with the proper presence and consent of their parents and family members. After all, marriage is a social contract. The organisers need to be aware of the possibility that their attempts to break the taboo associated with premarital relationships will codify new norms. An institutionalised mass wedding will replace one form of social regulation with another. It could be symptomatic of the post-ideological world that is unfolding all around us.

There has never been any restriction on students marrying young, except for the convention of forbidding married or pregnant students from living in residential halls. This has been an age-old policy, presumably

government. During one such town hall meeting, a student of mine reminded us of the post-ideological phase that we are experiencing. The traditional narratives of hierarchy and political profiling are no longer applicable. He was implying that teachers often use arrogant rhetoric to intimidate students, trapping them in a cultural appropriation of the "us and them" binary.

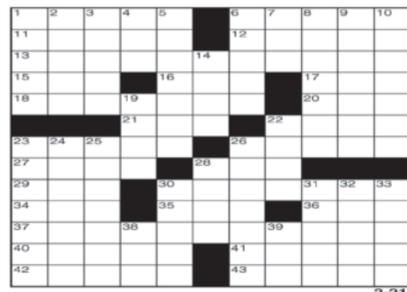
Post-ideology challenges traditional social organisation, which upholds belief or faith base as a necessary "civilising" mode for the masses to integrate into society. It challenges people's vertical subordination to the truth of god, king, priests, nation, party, parents, or even department heads. The traditional norm demands a power pivot. What do you do when you don't have a centre to draw your circle of truth? You literally "go through the motions"

and unfamiliar. For instance, when you hear the logic of taboo associated with marriage, you may recall the growing trends among independent women who prioritise their career growth over raising a family and fostering an in-law relationship. On the flipside, you can associate the taboo with the idea of a male and a female pursuing an academic goal that traditional religion may not approve of. You decide which pillar to explore.

This is the generation that is upending known ideologies: the utopian socialists who promoted communal living, the liberalist Western concept of free mixing or living together, or the conservative idea of segregating the male from the female altogether. Is it going to be the death of all known ideologies? Will some ideologies become more influential than others? The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind.

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**  
1 Rot  
6 Played a role  
11 Wed in haste  
12 Baseball's Joe  
13 Ladder company's base  
15 Greek vowel  
16 Crooner Tormé  
17 Curvy letter  
18 Set free  
20 Conk out  
21 Scoundrel  
22 Sweater material  
23 Sacred song  
26 Ron Weasley's sister  
27 Finish last  
28 Chips buy  
29 Band blaster  
30 Monarch's spouse  
34 Maiden name label  
35 Unoriginal  
36 Aussie hopper  
37 Planting of trees  
40 Beginning  
41 Not tight  
42 Staggers  
43 Layout choices
- DOWN**  
1 Put off  
2 Best of the best  
3 Reef material  
4 Gorilla, for one  
5 Polite answer  
6 "— of Two Cities"  
7 Guest's bed  
8 Checked for fit  
9 Canyon creator  
10 How some areas are populated  
14 Exam  
19 Writer — Stanley Gardner  
22 Costume parts  
23 Anticipate  
24 Unnamed person  
25 Malign  
26 Tolkien wizard  
28 Nut's partner  
30 Sells for  
31 Stellar hunter  
32 Perch  
33 Phone sounds  
38 Long fish  
39 Overly



### AUGUST 19 ANSWERS



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# SURVIVOR'S GUILT

## The emotional toll of making it through

ADRIN SARWAR

We've been through a lot lately; it feels like waking up from one nightmare only to enter another.

From the July revolution to the floods in August, each event has only added to the already struggling lives of the country's people. Darwin's "survival of the fittest" resonates strongly in our current situation.

But what about those who didn't make it through all these ordeals like you? What about the lives they dreamt of and the future they were about to live? These questions have been bothering many of us now, more than usual.

Survivor's guilt, the feeling of unworthiness for surviving or escaping a traumatic event or experience while others did not, is a common response in such situations. When you come through unscathed while others suffer, one question might repeat in your mind: "Why not me?" Even if you weren't directly affected by the event, it could still haunt you, leaving you confused and feeling undeserving of being spared when others were not.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, survivor's guilt is not a diagnosable condition on its own but rather a symptom. It can manifest as part of complicated grief or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), leading to feelings of unworthiness, self-blame, and persistent guilt. Addressing survivor's guilt is crucial, as it can intensify conditions like PTSD and grief, making recovery more challenging.

Saurav Baidya, Mental Health and Psychological Support (MHPSS) Officer at Handicap International shares his perspective, "When a person survives a tragedy, there is a feeling of guilt, which may be heightened by perceiving one's actions as inadequate in helping others. This feeling of not being worthy to live and the residual guilt can haunt them forever."

This sentiment is reflected by Shaikha Azam Ohona, a student at Dhaka University (DU), who says, "In the face of overwhelming events like the Quota Reform Movement and the recent floods in Bangladesh, it's natural to feel a deep sense of guilt for being safe. During the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, I went to do graffiti. When I heard police sirens there, I ran, and after coming home, I felt suffocated. It felt like the whole world had left me. I started hallucinating and would hear people calling out to me in my sleep, asking me to help and save them. I felt utterly helpless, more so than ever before."

Survivor's guilt can manifest as flashbacks or nightmares that take you back to the traumatic event, consuming your mind with constant thoughts of what had happened. Persistent feelings of not having done enough, irritability, and difficulty moving on from the experience are also common.

Rakibul Hasan Sanjer, another student from DU, says, "I was constantly preoccupied with thoughts of what I could have done differently. The guilt over not participating in the [quota reform] protests made it difficult to focus on everyday tasks. I couldn't relax, not even while reading, which usually calms me. I felt emotionally exhausted and helpless."

Studies show that survivors often feel responsible for the death or injury of others, even when they have no real control over the situation. Tamanna Mahjabin Anchol, a student at Khulna University of Engineering & Technology, reflects on this, saying, "The recent floods made me feel guilty for living my ordinary daily life while others were suffering and dying due to the lack of basic needs. It made me appreciate what I have. It felt like a privilege to have a roof over my head and a warm bed to sleep in."

Even when a tragic

situation unfolds far from the survivor, the feelings of guilt and helplessness can still be overwhelming. Events like the ongoing genocide in Gaza or the RG Kar Medical College rape case in Kolkata have triggered deep emotional responses, leaving many grappling with intense guilt despite being thousands of miles away. These feelings can manifest in unsettling ways, as Shaikha Azam Ohona shares, "The day I heard about the RG Kar Medical College rape case in Kolkata, I couldn't sleep. The news weighed heavily on my mind, and I began hearing voices at night. It felt as though someone was knocking on my window, filling me with a sense of dread and helplessness."

Survivor's guilt often leads to a decrease in self-esteem, as Baidya explains, "They feel they did not deserve to survive, which negatively impacts their self-esteem. This guilt is almost always linked to PTSD."

A similar concern is shared by Nayeema Islam Antora, a psychologist, who adds, "The ongoing emotional distress often increases depression and anxiety, making recovery more challenging. The internalisation of guilt can become a pervasive barrier to achieving a sense of well-being and normalcy."

This guilt can also damage relationships, leading to withdrawal from others. People may assume that others blame them for what happened, just as they blame themselves. Nayeema further explains, "Common misconceptions about survivor's guilt include the belief that it is a sign of weakness or a lack of resilience. There is a mistaken notion that time alone will heal these feelings or that those affected should simply move on. In reality, survivor's guilt is a complex and deeply rooted emotional response that often requires professional intervention and support for proper healing. Understanding and addressing these misconceptions is vital for providing appropriate support to those affected."

Coping with survivor's guilt involves more than just time; it requires active efforts to heal. In addition to seeking professional treatment, there are coping mechanisms that can help manage these troubling feelings.

Regarding effective self-care strategies, Nayeema Islam says, "Mindfulness and self-compassion practices can help in managing guilty feelings. Mindfulness can help individuals stay present and reduce the impact of intrusive thoughts. Self-compassion involves treating oneself with kindness and understanding, which can counteract feelings of self-blame. Engaging in physical activities, maintaining a balanced lifestyle, and seeking professional support are also essential for overall well-being."

"Cognitive Behavioral Therapy can help to challenge and change guilty thoughts," says Baidya. "Techniques such as eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) allow traumatic memories to be 'worked through' and integrated into memory."

Survivor's guilt is a silent burden. It is not a weakness. With the right support and strategies, it's possible to move forward and find peace.

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# BookTok and dark romance: What's wrong with it?

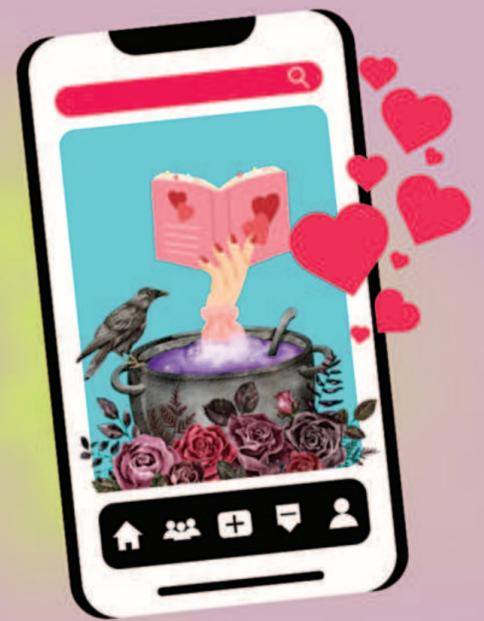


ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

ANICA BUSHRA RAHMAAN

The emergence of BookTok around 2020 appeared to be a promising endeavour: a space dedicated to explore newer literary grounds, to engage in passionate discussions, and allow the love for words to soar. However, soon, BookTok revealed its challenges.

In the world of BookTok, tropes such as "enemies to lovers", "fake dating", etc. hold a higher appeal than actual plots. To satiate the demand for these popular tropes, authors tend to repackage the same stories to an ever-growing audience, creating an echo chamber of the same ten books. If you are looking for diversity on BookTok, you will have to carefully curate your algorithm to find your preferences.

Another problem with BookTok is that it fosters a culture of overconsumption. Rather than reading a specific book because you simply want to, you are left striving after yearly book goals because every other person on the platform is doing the same, taking away the inherent pleasure of reading.

Despite all these issues, the most pressing concern surrounding BookTok is its rising emphasis on dark romance books. Interested readers gobble it up because these books are easy to consume and entertaining. As these books gain prominence, the serious implications it imposes on the younger readers are overlooked.

Dark romance books are a subgenre of romance, encompassing darker and more intense themes along with mature content. In a nutshell, in the majority of these books, the female protagonists fall for men who engage in predatory behaviour such as kidnapping and stalking. Such portrayals are not only normalised but also romanticised in some cases.

As BookTok's user-driven content allows viral trends to emerge across diverse genres into one's algorithm, currently, dark romance is taking the BookTok

community by storm. Consequently, younger readers may inadvertently encounter content that is not appropriate for them. The lack of regulation on the platform does not help matters either.

About a quarter of TikTok users in the US fall within the age bracket of 10-19 as per a demographic study. Imagine the vast number of young readers exposed to such mature and inappropriate themes. And that is just taking one country into consideration.

While adults have the intellectual and emotional capacity to distinguish fiction from reality, the same cannot be said for the younger audience. What message do dark romance books convey to them? These books will inevitably set dangerous

boyfriends," no matter how captivating they are rendered to be.

Due to their sensitive nature, dark romance books now almost always have a list of trigger warnings at the beginning, often across two or three pages. However, the trigger warnings tend to deviate from serving their actual purpose and instead are added to the shopping cart by those wishing to dabble in such taboo topics because it's their "guilty pleasure". Of course, it can be fun to read about darker themes and twisted, morally grey characters but not at the expense of romanticising sexual assault and deeply problematic consent.

So, what exactly is the solution? Firstly, dark romance books should not have misleading covers with cutesy, dainty undertones, disguising the mature content within with the facade of a light, wholesome read. Age limits and trigger warnings should also be presented on the covers of the books so as to better inform the young teens as well as their parents.

Most importantly, authors and BookTokers should sell the book for what it is. Instead of saying that this is a book for girls who like villains, it may be a better idea to remind the audience that the material is not appropriate for younger readers, the depictions in the book are only possible in fiction, and should never be normalised.

This is not a call to discredit BookTok. Even with its problems, BookTok actively inspires more people to read, brings emerging authors into the spotlight, helps readers discover their new favourite book, and a lot more. Yet, it is possible to cultivate an inclusive literary community while considering the well-being of the younger generation. Ultimately, everyone has their roles to play in ensuring something as precious as books is not tainted and continues to be cherished.

Reference: Exploding Topics (June 12, 2024), *TikTok User Age, Gender & Demographics*

**Despite all these issues, the most pressing concern surrounding BookTok is its rising emphasis on dark romance books. Interested readers gobble it up because these books are easy to consume and entertaining.**

precedents for these young readers about the kind of treatment they should tolerate from a partner.

Promoting such stories in the guise of romance can prevent them from recognising when they are in abusive situations or even acting as abusers themselves. It could even push them to pursue partners exhibiting toxic traits. Such narratives imply that the suffering caused at the hands of their partners (literally) is a deep sign of love, a form of protection, and that controlling and manipulative behaviour is not just acceptable but desirable. Such characters should not be labelled as "book

# The role media plays in creating space for people with disabilities

MAHPARA FAATIN

Just last year, *Twinkling Watermelon* had taken social media by storm, with fans raving about how heartwarming the Korean drama was. But, the show had also set off a unique spark: people across the globe were learning sign language to recreate scenes from the show, which was refreshing to see in a world where sign language tends to be limited to the disabled and their immediate social circles.

Films and TV shows have had

a long history of creating compelling depictions of disabilities, which, in turn, have positively influenced the way society perceives them. Bollywood itself has given us many memorable movies starring characters with disabilities like *Taare Zameen Par*, *Hitchki*, *Barfi!*, and *My Name Is Khan* to name a few.

Arguably, some of the most impactful of these representations are those targeted towards a younger audience. DC gave us Barbara Gordon in a wheelchair while Disney gave all young dyslexic Percy Jackson fans a chance to claim themselves as Greek demigods. Disabled characters in *Barbie* and even Mattel's line of Barbie Dolls with Disabilities all play a role towards creating a friendlier environment for those who live with disabilities.

In a society where individuals with disabilities are often ostracised, the necessary reforms required to make

their lives more comfortable are often not prioritised. Thus, the influence of media remains of utmost importance since it holds the ability to break through negative perceptions commonly held against people with disabilities and allow individuals to highlight the lesser-discussed struggles and perspectives.

Kim Hye-yoon, in *Lovely Runner*, tugged at our heartstrings by exceptionally acting out the pain and desperation of a girl losing her ability to

Foot was so dedicated to his role that he suffered two broken ribs, but couldn't they have cast someone with cerebral palsy to begin with? One may argue that there aren't a lot of disabled actors but that couldn't be far from the truth.

Netflix, surprisingly, was the one to do it right by casting blind actor Aria Loberti to star in the film based on the Pulitzer Award-winning novel, *All the Light We Cannot See*. Furthermore, we cannot forget Millicent Simmonds, who played Regan, a character who is deaf in the

horror movie franchise *A Quiet Place*. Her interview with CBS Mornings bears testament to how big of a stepping stone her casting was where she said, "Never did I think I'd become a professional actor. We don't see that, you don't ever see people like me on the screens... I want kids out there to see themselves represented on the screen. They can be the ones to save people, they don't have to be saved."

As actors with disabilities are not given the opportunity to play a wide variety of roles, it seems extremely outrageous to cast able-bodied actors for the few roles that do exist which depict disabilities. What is even more outrageous is insensitive representation, like that in *Music* or in all the films that have used people with speech impairments for comic relief or the ones where they showcase the disabled as pitiable characters.

Representation is important but holds no value if it isn't meaningful.



walk. But is exceptional acting a good enough representation?

Popular singer Sia's film *Music* about a person with autism was criticised for being offensive and for casting a neurotypical actress. Disney's upcoming *Snow White* live-action is currently under fire for using CGI to depict the seven dwarfs instead of real actors with dwarfism.

From the abundance of movies of this genre being produced, only a handful are played by disabled actors. Sure, Daniel Day-Lewis in his 1989 movie *My Left*



## SPORT

What to WATCH

**STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1**  
English Premier League  
Southampton vs Man Utd  
Live from 5:30 pm  
Liverpool vs  
Nottingham Forest  
Live from 8:00 pm

Everton vs Aston Villa  
Live from 10:30 pm  
Bournemouth vs Chelsea  
Live from 1:00 am (Sunday)  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT HD2**  
Manchester City vs Brentford  
Live from 8:00 pm



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Batters' test on the cards in Chennai

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will go into the India Tests carrying over confidence from their recent away series win against Pakistan. However, the first Test in Chennai against the Asian giants is likely to serve up challenges that would test Bangladesh's batting which showed signs of frailty even during the 2-0 sweep in Rawalpindi.

In the two Tests against Pakistan, Bangladesh only had left-handers in the top four and all of whom struggled against in-swinging deliveries, with right-arm pacer Khurram Shahzad exploiting this weakness multiple times throughout the series.

Against India, Bangladesh are likely to be up against the likes of Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Siraj, right-arm pacers who are much quicker than Shahzad and would surely zero in on exploiting this glaring weakness.

The pitch at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai is also likely to add to the difficulties for the batters.

In the last two Tests played at the ground, England won one and India took the second during the 2021 series. Joe Root got a double hundred as England won by a big margin of 227 runs on a flat and slow surface.

India then won by a bigger margin, 317, in the second Test while there was hue and cry from the English side over it being played on a 'sandpit' pitch.

The Tigers do not have the best of times on rank turners, even at home. In India, spin takes on even more precedence, with

vigorous turns on offer.

If Ravichandran Ashwin is leading the spinners, there is Bumrah leading a lethal pace attack. Couple that with the experience and skill of the Indian attack and with the prominent seam—much harder than Kookaburra or Duke—of the SG balls used in India, the Tiger batters will have to effectively be prepared for anything.

India began their practice session in Chennai yesterday under new coaching staff headed by Gautam Gambhir. What their plans might be heading into a busy Test season where they play New Zealand and Australia in pacy conditions away from home, remains to be seen.

On one hand they could look to unsettle Bangladesh with spin since the conditions present that opportunity but at the same time, pacers may have something in the pitches for them to help prepare for their upcoming away series.

Bangladesh's former technical consultant Sridharan Sriram, who hails from Chennai, feels 'anything is possible' when it comes to how the Chennai pitch would play.

"I have had a lot of people asking me about Chennai, I honestly don't know as I have been in the UK and haven't been to the stadium after IPL. Anything is possible, depends on how much grass the square has. I don't know how the India team management would want it," Sriram told The Daily Star yesterday.

Thus, a heightened test of batsmanship is on the cards as Bangladesh prepare for the first Test.

Shakib said eye issue not a problem now: Hemp

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Bangladesh batting coach David Hemp said that premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan had told him during the Pakistan series this month that the eye issue that has been of concern to the cricketer as of late is no longer 'a problem at the moment'.

"When it initially happened, he found it a bit challenging. More recently, however, he's managed it and is coping with that [eyesight issues]. He said that the issue with the eye isn't a problem at the moment," Hemp told The Daily Star yesterday when asked about batter Shakib's condition.

Recently, Shakib claimed 9-193 in the County Championship Division One match for Surrey against Somerset but managed to score only 12 and 0 with the bat.

Since the last ICC World Cup 2023 in India, Shakib's struggle with the bat became an issue as the player was diagnosed with a retinal condition in his left eye after he reported having visual discomfort.

"From the work he has done in Pakistan, I can say he is getting into good positions and striking it nicely.

"I haven't seen him bat in the UK, so can't comment on that," Hemp added.

## Women's football team to play World Cup Qualifiers directly

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football team will get direct opportunity to compete in FIFA Women's World Cup Qualifiers as the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) yesterday introduced a separate qualifying competition for 2031 Women's World Cup, according to a statement from the continental body.

The AFC announced it would create a three-round preliminary competition, starting in 2027, to determine the continent's qualifiers for the finals though the host nation for the 2031 tournament has not been decided yet.

AFC previously organised Women's World Cup Qualifiers with the teams being decided through performance in the Women's Asian Cup or Asian Games, but this time there will be a standalone competition that will give lower-ranked sides more opportunities to play against higher-ranked sides.

The new format will be held in three rounds with the bottom-ranked teams

— based on FIFA ranking — playing in the opening round. Subject to the number of entries, these teams will be grouped to compete in a single round-robin centralised league format.

Then the top teams, based on the group results, will advance to Round 2 which will feature 24 teams including the top eight ranked sides in line with FIFA ranking.

Teams will then be divided into six four-nation groups to face off in a single round-robin centralised league format with the top-two finishers advancing to the third round.

Three groups of four teams will then compete in a home-and-away group format with the number of qualifiers for the finals determined by the continent's allocation.

The next edition of the Women's World Cup will be played in Brazil in 2027, with the Women's Asian Cup — to be hosted by Australia a year earlier — acting as the continent's qualifiers for the finals.

A new two-phase qualifying competition for the 2029 edition of



the Women's Asian Cup, to be played in Uzbekistan, has also been launched, meaning Bangladesh will get more competitive matches in coming days.

Round 1 will feature participating teams ranked ninth and below in the as the AFC aims to draw teams into eight groups of three or four, with the top 16 teams progressing to Round 2, subject to the number of entries.

Then, 16 teams will join the top eight FIFA-ranked sides and the 24-team second strong cast will be divided into six groups of four teams and the winner of each group and the five best second-placed team will advance to the finals of Women's Asia Cup.

Bangladesh, however, will miss the matches of Olympic Qualifiers with AFC abolishing the previous three-round qualifiers for Olympic Games by introducing a new format in which the top eight teams of Asian Women's Cup will battle for the right to reach the Olympic Games.

## Hathurusingha returns tonight

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha is set to arrive in Dhaka tonight at 11:30 PM ahead of the Tigers' upcoming tour of India.

Hathurusingha, who left the country for Australia on September 5, a day after the Tigers returned home from Pakistan, didn't feature in their week-long training session in Mirpur.

However, the Sri Lankan's stay in Dhaka will be a short one as the Bangladesh contingent is scheduled to leave for India at 1:15 PM on Sunday to feature in the two-match Test series. The series will be followed by three T20s.

Earlier on Thursday, pace bowling coach Andre Adams, who also took a short break after the Pakistan series, arrived in the country and conducted a training session with the pacers in Mirpur yesterday.

The Tigers have no practice scheduled for today, but players may practice individually.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has arranged a winning bonus handing over ceremony for the team for their recent series win over Pakistan at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel today at 4:00 pm. Adviser for the Ministry of Youth and Sports Asif Mahmud will be the chief guest at the event.

## 'Matter of time for Vinicius to reach his best level'

REUTERS, Madrid

Bombarded with questions about Vinicius Junior's form at a press conference on Friday, Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti said he was unconcerned about his star forward's form and mentioned that he expected the Brazilian to bounce back quickly.

Ancelotti acknowledged that Vinicius was not at his best and stressed that the player needs support following criticism of his slow start to the season with Real and lacklustre performances for Brazil in a narrow win over Ecuador and a shock loss at Paraguay during the international break.

"He's not at his best, but he's still very important for us. We're in no hurry because the team has managed to score and he has been important... and the last concern for me is Vinicius' condition, but we have to take good care of him," Ancelotti said ahead of their LaLiga clash at Real Sociedad on Saturday.



"He always works well and it's a matter of just time for him to reach his best level. I can't fool myself thinking that I'll have all players at 100% at all times.

"I don't want to go into his problems in Brazil but what I see is a more general issue because they are not managing to bring out their best version as a group. Here we are delighted with Vinicius

because although he is not at his best right now, no one can forget that with Vini we have been able to win two Champions League titles... We have to be very fond of him at Madrid."

Ancelotti said that he will have to evaluate the fitness of Vinicius and his Brazil team mates Rodrygo and Endrick after a long trip back from international duty

in order to minimise the risks of injury as his side gear up for a busy schedule with seven games in the next three weeks.

Ancelotti will face a selection headache ahead of Saturday's clash at Sociedad with defender David Alaba and midfielders Jude Bellingham, Eduardo Camavinga, Dani Ceballos and Aurelien Tchouameni still recovering from injuries.

"The players who have just come back from the international break, like Vinicius Jr, Rodrygo and Endrick who had long travels with Brazil, are under observation because they haven't had time to rest or train.

"We have to try to avoid injuries, last year we had a lot of injuries but we managed to cope very well. With this schedule, it's normal to have injuries and we have to face it," Ancelotti said.

Barcelona top the LaLiga standings with 12 points, four ahead of Real Madrid, Atletico and Villarreal and five above fifth-placed Girona.



PHOTO: LIVERPOOL

Liverpool boss Arne Slot will want to keep his talisman Mohamed Salah happy if the Reds are to continue their marauding start in the Premier League. Liverpool and rivals Manchester City are the only two sides left with a 100 percent record with three wins. Salah has had an explosive start to the season, scoring one in each of Liverpool's opening fixtures. The 32-year-old, who is in the last year of his contract, has also provided three assists so far.



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## Swechchhasebak Dal leader killed in attack by 'AL men'

### 50 injured; Gopalganj AL refutes the allegation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A Jatiyabadi Swechchhasebak Dal leader was killed and 50 others were injured in an attack allegedly by Awami League men in Gopalganj town yesterday.

The deceased, Shawkat Ali Didar, 40, was the sports affairs secretary of the Swechchhasebak Dal central committee, police said.

Of the injured, 21 were admitted to Gopalganj 250-Bed General Hospital.

Sharif Rafikuzzaman, convener of Gopalganj district BNP, said the party's motorcade left for Tungipara after holding a rally at Bedgram intersection around 5:00pm.

As the vehicles reached Ghonapara, 200-300 leaders and activists of the AL and its affiliates intercepted them and attacked BNP and Swechchhasebak Dal leaders, he said.

The attackers also vandalised 10 cars and injured at least 50 activists, he said.

Swechchhasebak Dal President SM Jilani and his wife Roshan Ara Ratna, president of Gopalganj District Mohila Dal, were sent to Dhaka for better treatment, he added.

Mohammad Anisur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Gopalganj Sadar Police Station, said the incident occurred around 5:00pm.

Upon receiving information, police went to the spot

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Palestinians work to rescue a child from under the rubble following an Israeli strike in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip. The photo taken on Thursday was released yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Drop names from cases if involvement not found

### Directs police HQ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Police Headquarters has issued directives regarding arrests in cases filed with police stations and courts over killings and other crimes during the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement that led to a mass uprising.

The letter, signed by Deputy Inspector General Kamrul Ahsan, said steps have to be taken to drop the name of any officer or individual if their involvement in murder or other cases is not found during primary investigation.

It further said no government employee can be arrested without proof in cases filed by the families of those killed during the movement, or by any aggrieved person.

The directives, citing the minutes of the first meeting of advisory committee on law and order, were issued on September 10, DIG Kamrul told The Daily Star yesterday.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## Bid to destroy unity among parties, people must be resisted

### Says Mirza Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday emphasised the importance of maintaining unity to solidify the success of the student-led mass uprising.

"The victory achieved through the student revolution will only be consolidated if unity is maintained," he said.

Stating that there is a well-planned attempt to destroy the unity of the political parties and the people, the BNP leader said, "It must be resisted."

Fakhrul was speaking at a reception at the Jatiya Press Club hosted in honour of journalist Mushfiqul Fazal Ansari, marking his return home from the US after a decade-long exile.

The event was organised by the Jatiya Press Club, BFUJ, DUJ, Dhaka Reporters' Unity, and the Journalists' Cooperative Society Limited.

Fakhrul criticised former prime minister Sheikh Hasina for resorting to coercive policies to suppress her political opponents and dissent.

"Many people were subjected to



SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## US must intervene to stop Gaza carnage

Says 'helpless' UN chief as 16 more die in the Palestinian enclave

AGENCIES

UN chief Antonio Guterres, in an exclusive interview with Al Jazeera, said that the US must put more pressure on Israel to end its war on Gaza as the violence on the ground raged on yesterday.

The message conveyed by Guterres to the US in the interview with Al Jazeera is that it must intervene, Tamer Qarmout, professor at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, said.

Guterres said the US being "the only superpower that is enabling Israel to continue its war through funding weapons, arms and providing diplomatic protection," he said.

"The message is loud and clear: the US has to intervene", Qarmout quoted the UN chief as saying. "The US administration has been enabling this war to continue for too long."

However, Guterres acknowledged that the demand is very unlikely to be heard.

"I know the American political life sufficiently to know that will not happen," Guterres said.

The UN chief said it is, however, important to keep pressuring the US and make it clear that "the two-state solution must not be undermined".

Meanwhile, medical sources in Gaza yesterday confirmed at least 16 Palestinians' death in Israeli attacks since the early hours of the morning.

This number includes five members of the same

family who, according to the Palestinian Civil Defence, were killed in an attack on al-Mawasi in south Gaza this morning. It said two children were among those killed.

Meanwhile, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus yesterday reiterated his "call for a ceasefire, which is critical for rebuilding the health system to cope with escalating needs" in Gaza.

He said on X: "Amid the ongoing hostilities, it is critical to ensure access to all essential health services, including rehabilitation to prevent illness and death."

In the Al-Jazeera interview, Guterres laid bare his helplessness in stopping the war.

"I have no power to stop the war. We have a voice, and that voice has been loud and clear to say from the beginning this war must stop. The suffering of the Palestinian people must stop and the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people must be recognised."

Accusing the Security Council of "systematic failure" in ending the most dramatic conflicts that we face today, the UN chief said, "The geopolitical divide that exists among the major powers has created a situation in which any country or any movement anywhere in the world feels that they can do whatever they want because there will be no punishment."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

- » WHO chief calls for ceasefire to rebuild Gaza health system
- » West Bank city holds funerals after Israeli army withdraws
- » US shifts one of two aircraft carriers away from Middle East

## At least 875 killed in July mass uprising

### Says rights organisation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 875 people, including students and labourers, were killed in the recent student-led mass uprising, according to a report released by Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) yesterday.

The report was prepared based on the statistics from 12 national newspapers and data from the rights body's own fact-finding units and volunteers across the country.

"We have so far received information on 875 deaths from the victims' families, eyewitnesses, hospitals, and national dailies. Among them, 743 have been identified," said the HRSS report.

It also mentioned that the actual death toll could be at least 1,000.

According to the report, 327 people were killed between July 16 and August 3, and 548 between August 4 and September 9.

Notably, 748 people were killed during the seven days between July 18 and 20 and August 4 and 7.

At least 222 people were killed on August 5, the day of the fall of Hasina-led government, it added.

Among 619 victims, 107 were children under 18 years of age, 327 young adults, 158 middle-aged, and 27 were elderly people.

Around 70 percent of the identified victims were aged below 30. Also, 13 female children and women were among the deceased.

The report said the professions of 352 victims have been identified. About 52 percent of them were students.

Specifically, 184 of the deceased were students, 70 labourers, 51 members of law enforcement agencies, 5

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

## India SC grants bail to Kejriwal in graft case

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's Supreme Court yesterday granted bail to opposition leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a graft case, paving the way for his release almost six months after he was arrested.

Kejriwal's release is expected to boost the morale of his decade-old Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as it will allow him to campaign in regional elections next month in the northern state of Haryana, where AAP is trying to make inroads, and in Delhi early next year.

Kejriwal was first taken into custody in March by India's financial crime-fighting agency, weeks before the country's national elections, in relation to alleged irregularities in the capital city's liquor policy.

Although he was granted bail in that case in July, he remained in detention due to his arrest a month previously by the federal police in a graft case

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



## Shrine comes under attack in Gazipur

### Vandalism went on for an hour

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

The Shah Sufi Fasih Paglar Mazar was vandalised in Gazipur's Porabari area yesterday afternoon.

Nearly 100 people went to the shrine on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway around 3:00pm and carried out the attack. The vandalism continued for an hour, said witnesses.

The attackers barred ordinary people, including journalists, from taking pictures and videos.

They alleged that the devotees of the shrine organised dance and music programmes, and they also used to take drugs at the shrine. Besides, the devotees collected money as toll from the people on the highway in the name of the shrine, they said.

The attackers demanded that the shrine be demolished and a mosque be built in the area.

Zakir Hossain, a local involved in the shrine's management, said drugs were prohibited there and so they strongly protest the attack.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Workers are busy assembling battery-run rickshaws in front of a factory in the capital's Rayerbazar on Thursday. The demand for such rickshaws increased recently as the last government allowed the three-wheelers to run on the city streets.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## 'Comrade Kamala'

### Trump paints Harris red in quest for votes

AFP, Washington

"Everyone knows she's a Marxist," Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump has repeated loudly and often, referring to his Democratic rival Kamala Harris, who he is hoping to tar with one of the oldest brushes in the US political playbook.

The aim? To portray Harris as a dangerous left-wing extremist, and to invoke the infamous Cold War-era "red scare" in the United States.

In recent weeks, the former president has stepped up his rhetoric against the vice president, describing her as both a "Marxist" and a "communist" at almost every opportunity.

Harris has not directly addressed the taunts, but her policies over decades of holding public office do not appear to conform to either the 19th-century German theorist's views or the various left-wing schools of thought that followed him.

"She's not a Marxist, she's not a communist," said Thomas Zeitzoff, a professor at American University and a specialist on political violence.

For the Republican camp, using such terms is "a way of trying to say that she's extreme," he told AFP.

Trump, experts say, is using an age-old US political

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5





PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

FROM WHOLESALE WONDERS TO POP-UP SHOPS

# The thriving world of BANGLADESHI CERAMICS

“You get six full plates in beautiful designs for just Tk 900 or a little more, I mean these are best for gifts and everyday use. I am here to buy 300 pieces of gift items as a party favour, I am arranging for friends,” says Bilquis Hossain, a customer.

RAFAAT BINTE RASHID

Bangladesh's booming ceramic industry is as thriving as our readymade garment (RMG) sector, which I say from my many shopping exploits. I have gathered a vast knowledge about what kind of ceramics wares are found in vans or pop-up shops and wholesale markets like Cheragali Ceramics Market at the turn of Tongi towards Uttara.

According to the website of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), the ceramic industry is expanding and progressing towards being the third largest export sector of Bangladesh. This manufacturing sector caters to 85 percent of the local demand, which includes traditional ceramics such as tableware, tiles, sanitaryware, insulators, heavy clay, etc. The good news is that Bangladeshi ceramics products are exported to over 50 countries.

“As an export-oriented industry, we always focus on and maintain quality parameters at the international standard level. During export order productions, we plan to produce around five percent more than the order quantity to secure on-time delivery. All the products you

with maybe a slight tilt or colour mismatch or some subtle issue, that only an inspector can see, are found in local shopping places. But trust me when I say this, the products are truly mind-blowing.

I got some Versailles inspired tea party crockery; the opulence of French decor and ornate pattern in cream white with gilt and beautiful hand-painted flowers or whimsical fairy tale drawing has set my mind

and Upohar, situated at the end of the narrow aisle. They are busy with customers who seek exclusive stoneware, chinaware, porcelain, and ceramic objects of export quality.

“What you find here comes directly from the factory, all intact, we do not sell rejected products, we are actually wholesalers and also do some retail sales because of demand. The distribution officers from reputed factories come to dealers like us and

our monthly expense and profit are sorted. The business is good, our product range is diversified and many of our clients come for export items,” says the grouchy salesman of Uphor, who has a no haggling honour, even if you insist on not paying that meagre Tk 20 change, he will not take it lightly.

“Fortunately, in porcelain tableware – all the products you find in van or thrift marketplaces are

industry. Now is the time to grab the opportunity of the world market with proper design and cost-efficient production process. The future of our tableware industry is very promising in the domestic market as well as in the international market,” he adds, briefly explaining the nuances of the industry.

I am a hardcore home decor and food styling planner, and for me, tablescapes or laying the party table is



into holding a Versailles tea party as soon as our depressive contour lifts. The tiny cake platters are just for Tk 60, and serving dishes with the Hamsa Hand, a universal sign of protection, power, and strength are found for just Tk 150 a piece.

Dainty tea cups and saucers in pink and gold, mugs, plates, and serving platters with joyful faces of fictional characters like Medusa or Salvador Dali, inspired surreal imagery with leaves, worms and flowers for as low as Tk 200, leave you with a yearning to throw, maybe a Neo-psychedelia themed party; just to add the sixties tempo to our sad days.

Rich glazed plates in indigo hue or salmon pink shades with golden border for Tk 1,400 for half a dozen, delicate pastry plates with expressional motifs bring nothing less than joy and it is nothing less than a wonder to find such a diverse and precious collection of ceramic crockery in the dingy rundown Cheragali Ceramics Market, vans parked in residential area, footpaths of adjoining areas in New Market and Gulshan DCC market.

Though prices vary according to locales, the lowest price is certainly in Cheragali. You enter through gate number five and you stumble upon two huge shops Sumaiya Collection

sell in lots. Each lot approximately has 30,000 products. When the working relation between marketing officers and a few favoured dealers like us is amiable, they offer to sell the extra export production.” Md Tafsir Ahmed, proprietor of Sumaiya Collection.

He adds that the products we find in vans are their yearly wastage lot, which they sell to small-time dealers of the vans and footpaths. This wastage load has breakage and misprints or mismatched objects. However, there are times when I am curious to find excellent quality ceramics being sold in vans, while the majority of the factory load is sold to big shops in Gulshan, New Market, and other ceramic shops.

“You get six full plates in beautiful designs for just Tk 900 or a little more, I mean these are best for gifts and everyday use. I am here to buy 300 pieces of gift items as a party favour, I am arranging for friends,” says Bilquis Hossain, a customer.

“With Tk 80,000 as shop rent, salaries for staff, and other miscellaneous expenditure, if we can sell Tk 2-3 lakhs worth of goods,

‘Made in Bangladesh’. Sometimes you get to see a different brand name under the product, this is because we produce for different brands worldwide. High quality and on-time delivery is a major standout point for our reputation in the international market. On top of that, we have expert and experienced manpower, especially for design application, which gives our product the ultra-edge and extra appeal,” says Khorshed Alam.

“The obstacle of this flourishing industry is the uninterrupted gas supply; it is one of the most important factors to consider for tableware production. Also, the tableware industry needs to be supported with a friendly duty structure for imported raw materials. It is another issue that needs to be addressed if we are to compete in this industry in the world market.

“The overall economy of the country is maintaining an uptrend, with the per capita income rising. These help to turn porcelain tableware into everyday goods rather than a luxury item. International brands have confidence in our tableware

my favourite part of hosting. Whether you're hosting a formal dinner party or enjoying a cosy family meal, a well-designed tablescape or table setting can transform a simple gathering into an event to remember. The arrangement of items on a table with matching or even carefully curated mismatched ceramic crockery elevates the dining experience with their refined aesthetic.

So, I always look out for unique, quirky, elegant, dainty tableware to take my game to the next level with a touch of sophistication and style. Heirloom pieces are of course most cherished but if you don't have one passed down, there is nothing to feel sorry about. There is plenty of fine china found in the vans of Dhaka that adds a touch of sophistication and nostalgia to your table.

The ceramic ware collection should be a pleasure and a joy for the connoisseur, and since porcelain wares have a long lifespan, they can outlive and can be passed down generations if stored safely. Whether you're upgrading your dinnerware collection or searching for the perfect gift for a special occasion, the ceramics market and stores in Dhaka promise to unleash your creative mind as far as dining experiences count.



find in vans and flying retailers are not rejected. Functional rejection in tableware is almost zero. However, there is always a chance of rejection in design due to high-temperature firing. And yes, these products are within an affordable price range,” explains Mohammad Khorshed Alam, chief operating officer of Building Materials, Akij Bashir Group.

It is this extra production of export orders that we find in local pop-up carts. Somehow, the rejected items



FICTION

# RESIDENCE

SHAHRIAR SHAAMS

“You are out of your mind!” Manik tells me, always. We share a room on the terrace. A small, cramped attic-room, painted green and smelling, perpetually, of the damp mattresses stored in one corner. Akbar has been generous enough to convince his father to rent it out to me. “Never mention you are a poet.”

Akbar has always wanted to be a writer. Only in the last three years has he wanted to be an American writer. “English sells,” he says, “So why not in the land of America, where anything can be sold!” He is my landlord’s only son, a short man who drinks tea with glucose. He wears bright, colourful Keds, which are Velcro and broken in. All he ever talks about are his frustrations regarding a literary career that in all likelihood seems doomed. He is pushing 40. A father of two school-going children. “I even drop the word ‘delve’ in every book review I write,” he says, “What more do they want from me?”

But that is not all. Akbar is founding member of a Robert Frost appreciation club here, a regular at discussions of latest ‘western’ novels in Dhaka, and can often be seen in bookstores in the Shahbag area absorbed in literary gossip with the store owners, with whom he has a good rapport. It had been during one of these conversations that I was introduced to him. I needed a place to stay, I was new to the city here, attending college.

“Are you a poet?” Akbar asked me that day with the eagerness of a city-dweller interested in the simple lives of someone from the mufassil.

“I try to be, bhai,” I said to him, hoping to impress him, “Every morning I wake up and pen a poem. If I don’t find the time, the rest of my day is ruined.”

“How endearing! And look at us living in the capital, with our A/Cs and laptops, we barely get any writing done.”

I did not mention that we, too, had A/Cs in my hometown, that I did not exactly write my imaginary poems inside a hut by the river.

“I write two lines and my wife barges in,” Akbar continued, “Wanting me to walk the children to school!”

I later find that Akbar mentions his wife a fair bit when he complains. They were married off when he was my age, partly in a bid to cure his obsession with writing and books. Akbar’s father, who frightens him a great deal, had arranged for him the daughter of one of his close friends. He never has nice things to say about her. She is yet another impediment to his calling as a writer. Akbar can be very dismissive of her when he wants to. One time, he tells me, “One must go to Hollywood to make it. There is no future for me here. Mina would never understand.”

On the contrary, Mina wants him to succeed. She tells me this when we kiss on the darkened staircase. It is a thrill making out with Akbar’s wife like this. A handful of times, we are on



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

the verge of being caught. “When he leaves for America, I can leave him and come be with you,” she says. “No more sneaking around.” I tell her I doubt her husband is going anywhere.

“He tries so hard to be a writer, of course one of these programmes has to take him in,” she says. But these programmes, they never write back to him. Akbar shows me his cutouts: illustrated cottages and exclamatory information, full of promises of literary stardom. He writes to all of them, requests them with all his heart, “Dear Sirs and/or Madams, I beg to state that I am a lonely writer,” he says, asking for the humbling opportunity to represent his land in the international arena, to be able to learn at their capable hands and come back a better representative for his people. The answer never arrives.

“It’s like I don’t exist, like my letters vanish altogether the instant they cross the borders of the city!”

Sometimes I daydream that he will be called up. My landlord will see how lonely his daughter-in-law has become and invite me to share her bed.

“You are out of your mind!” Manik tells me, always. We share a room on the terrace. A small, cramped attic-room, painted green and smelling, perpetually, of the damp mattresses

stored in one corner. Akbar has been generous enough to convince his father to rent it out to me. “Never mention you are a poet,” he warned me the first day, “Abba thinks our kind has no self-respect.” But Akbar needn’t have worried. I am a good tenant. Even Manik here is in awe of me. He works at a tea-shop during the day. I attend classes at my degree college nearby. I take English. Wordsworth, Cervantes, and some Shakespeare. Perhaps after completing my degree, I will join Manik at the tea-shop in the mornings and study for civil service exams at night. Akbar had studied English too in college. He went to the University of Dhaka. He believes this is one more reason we must be comrades. People laugh when he says he is a writer. They laugh with pity when he says he writes in English. Manik tells him he prefers his x-rated films in English. “High class language, brother. Gives you a different feeling. Oof.”

Akbar shares his work with me. He brings over sheaves of paper neatly typed with ‘A Life Blossoming’ or some other ghastly title creeping on top of every chapter with pride. I am assured, repeatedly, that the novel has enough naughtiness to keep my attention intact.

“I understand you appreciate a little screwing every few pages,” he says. How do I tell him I cannot be trusted to read his work? I am sleeping with his wife. I can only praise him. I will never be an impartial voice. Besides, as a student of English, I do not know anything about literature.

But it is Manik who becomes the end of me, not Akbar’s drive. I regret rooming with him—for anything he does, I am at fault. Akbar, perennially scared of his father, does not come to my defence.

Manik has stolen my landlord’s phone and run away with it. I do not foresee this happening because my days are spent largely thinking of Mina. Perhaps he has been thinking of leaving anyway and decided to nick a few items on his way out.

“You leave by the first of next month,” My landlord says, “It’s final.”

I plead but I know there is nothing I can do. Akbar, in a rare fit of courage, tries to intervene. But the old man does not budge. Maybe he knows about Mina and me. I wonder if the entire building knows about our affair. I smoke some Star and wait for Mina to come by the terrace. We hook up behind the water-

tank every night. Today she is not in the mood. She tells me Manik did us both dirty. “That bastard,” she says, “Don’t leave.”

“I’ll go back home. No point in my degree if the city cannot own me up.”

“Call me when Akbar goes to America, I’ll come by.”

“You will forget me,” Mina says, “Bastard.”

She wants to insult me more but Akbar’s mother comes up to the terrace and catches us together. She is an old lady, with white hair. Seeing her, one realises Akbar got all of her face.

“What are you doing here? Get inside,” she says. She looks at me with disgust. I worry if I can risk staying till the first of next month. Maybe I should just walk away right now. What will the difference be? I hope Akbar becomes a writer one day, an American writer. His success is what Mina and I will be hoping for, for the sake of our improbable future together. As I sneak out the building with the bare necessities I have, I wish him the best.

Shahriar Shaams has written for Dhaka Tribune, The Business Standard, and The Daily Star. He can be emailed at [shahriarshaams@gmail.com](mailto:shahriarshaams@gmail.com). Find him on X: @shahriarshaams.

POETRY

# The creek drank the sorrows you sang to

A.M. FAHAD

Rose-tinted glasses are just red, and I have painted myself with the color now that the hollow of your eyes isn’t there, now that the absence of it lingers in empty spaces and packed rooms and parking lots, where love was supposed to be, where love promises to be I have grown older since the dread in your voice last summer You see, I am trying, I am looking at what is left of the world with a kaleidoscope Piecing the scraps together from the bruises of the floor where you had left I sink my baby feet into the creek, now that the rain has swallowed its form I sink my teeth in my flesh, now that the sun has swallowed me whole And when the sky displays a crescendo of red, I try even less to think of that Sufjan Stevens song—the city drowns under my rotten breath Asymmetry is a language I am fluent in, for I continue to struggle to make meaning out of the sunlight on your shoulder-blade across the table in-front of the burnt coffee from The cafe that served burnt coffee Or the tenderness of your fingers on mine when the rainwater poured from underneath The cradle I sang to is a desire left at your doorstep and how you would tell me about the crevices in your skin or the way A leaf casts a shadow on the sidewalk



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

on the way back home Is only a memory stashed in a pile of boxes labeled ‘do not open’ But there is little sense to be made from the absurdity of desire (and its death) And I do not know when the light source fades away, and I don’t know of the jagged peaks that mark

the end to this yearning or despair but I do see the boundary line that marks the beginning The horizon where the last streak of sunlight ends is the birth of a tomorrow—I have found this longing at the end of the stream of water I long to drown in My toes sink gently at the creek, with

all the love I had to offer.

A.M. Fahad is an aspiring poet and writer from Dhaka. He uses vivid imagery and elements of nature to encapsulate his emotions with words, which often end up in a thought train rather than a conclusion. Find him at [amfahad1747@gmail.com](mailto:amfahad1747@gmail.com).

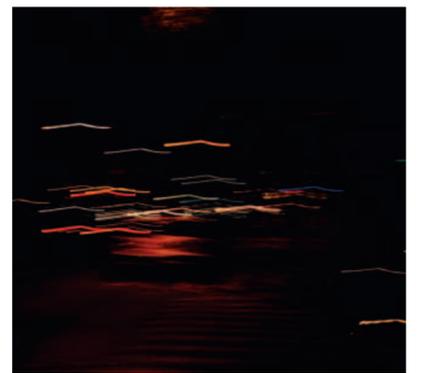


PHOTO: MAISHA SYEDA

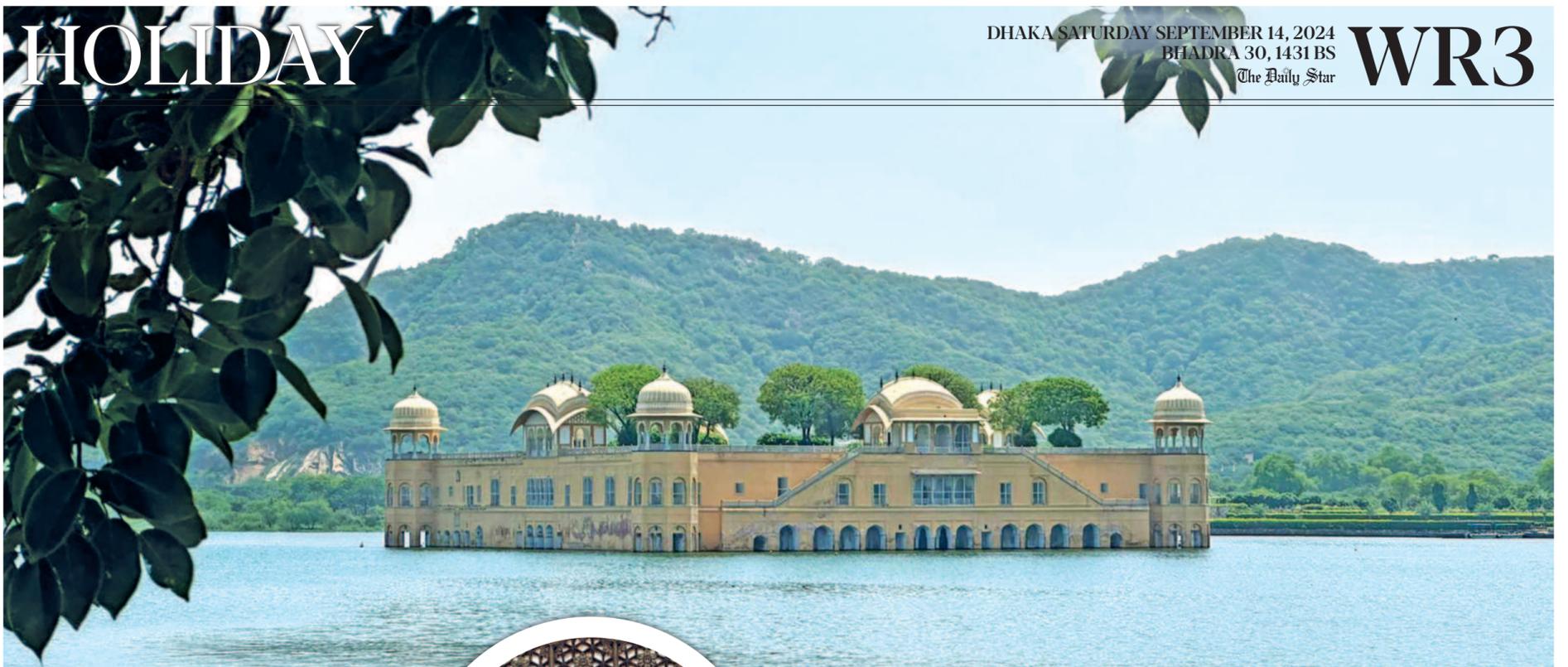
POETRY

# Hazardous miasma

RAVIYA HUMAIRA

The night smoke carries out the riots of innocents, The city is a menace to many unknown events. The cries, the screams are still there. To the bodies lying low that once had life. Crimson paint covers the night of 18th July. Bodies running numb and cold to a deadly scene. They’re deafened and blind by the power now, Who to call for help when the pain makes us scream? Blackout spread to even the last corners of the country, Blood stains sweep over the red and green. Chills running down my spine, With the sense of feeling unsafe in my homeland which I once called “MINE”... Deathly halloos spread through the air. Where once commoners’ laughter smeared. Midsummer has never felt so much cold, With the ghosts of the sufferers writing their stories untold.

Raviya Humaira is an aspiring writer from Dhaka, Bangladesh and an undergraduate student of Media and Journalism. She enjoys expressing her feelings through art and poetry, and her work can be found on various online platforms. Additionally, she participated in Slam Poetry Nights.



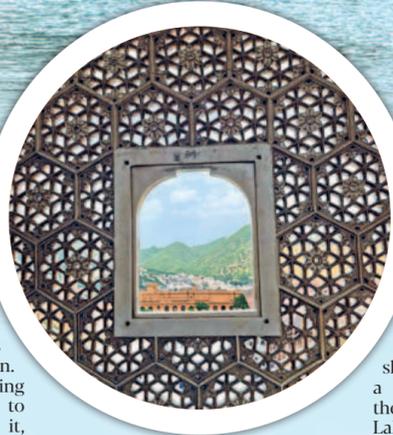
Jal Mahal

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## ASHIFUL ISLAM

Since childhood, my imagination of Rajasthan was shaped by Satyajit Ray's classic detective film *Sonar Kella* – a thrilling tale that masterfully captured the beauty, tradition, and history of this land of kings and forts. I have always been fascinated by the cultural richness and artistic traditions of Rajasthan. When I got to visit Jaipur during a tight-scheduled personal trip to India in September 2023, I took it, even though I wasn't sure how much I could truly explore.

We, my wife and I arrived in Jaipur at midnight, worn out from the long journey from Delhi. The hotel manager must have noticed something in us as he seemed unsure



City through Amber Palace window

dishes, giving them a distinctive taste. Our itinerary was ambitious, and we had to be mindful of how much time

of musicians played traditional folk songs, creating a magical atmosphere that matched the palace's colourful stained glass windows, which cast vibrant hues across the room.

We skipped the nearby market, known for its traditional goodies, deciding to return later in the day, and set off for our next destination. After a short drive, we arrived at Jal Mahal, a palace that appears to float on the surface of the serene Man Sagar Lake. Built as a hunting lodge for the Maharajas, only the top story of the palace is visible above water, with the remaining four submerged. Although morning wasn't the ideal time of day to visit, we managed to capture some memorable photos, dressed in traditional Rajasthani attire,

the fort or take a short drive. We chose to walk, soaking in the view as we climbed the steps. The first thing that struck me upon reaching the fort was its vast courtyard, Jaleb Chowk, where I was immediately enchanted by its size and grandeur.

The Sheesh Mahal (Mirror Palace) is the crown jewel of Amber Fort. Built in the 16th century by Maharaja Man Singh, the palace is adorned with precious stones and mirrors. When someone illuminates a single candle inside it, the light, reflected on thousands of glasses creates the vibe of thousands of twinkling stars. Sitting inside Sheesh Mahal, admiring the intricate craftsmanship, was a moment of pure wonder. Opposite the Sheesh Mahal lies the Diwan-i-Am (Hall of Public Audience), with its double row of columns topped



Amber Palace exit point

# A DAY IN JAIPUR

## A city of splendid forts, mahals and people



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whether to ask for our passports or point us toward the restaurant. After brief formalities, we wasted no time locating the restaurant and ordered the famous Rajasthani thali without a second thought. A 'thali' is a grand platter, an assortment of various single dishes, all served in small bowls. The Rajasthani Thali, in particular, is a feast – a balance of flavours ranging from sweet to spicy, believed to promote holistic health. The pungent aroma of the spices hit us as the food was served. Each dish had its distinctive blend of ingredients, offering a meal that was far from ordinary. After dinner, we fell into bed, exhausted, but eager to start early the next day.

The next morning, our driver, Bandia, who wasn't a local but had visited Rajasthan often enough to know it intimately, called us early to get ready. We grabbed a quick breakfast – bajra roti, a vegetable mix, and lahsun chutney – knowing that the day would be packed with sightseeing. Rajasthani cuisine, I discovered, makes brilliant use of the limited vegetables grown in the region. Beans and local ghee add a unique colour and flavour to the



Hawa Mahal

we could spend at each location. I like "slow travel" when I feel a connection to a place, but with limited time, we had to balance exploration with efficiency. Our first destination was the iconic Hawa Mahal or Palace of Winds. Located in the heart of Jaipur, this five-story palace was built in 1799 by Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh. Its honeycomb design, featuring 953 small windows with intricate latticework, allowed royal women to observe street processions while remaining unseen. The architecture was ingenious, allowing cool air to circulate and keeping the interior pleasant even during Rajasthan's scorching summers. Inside, a group

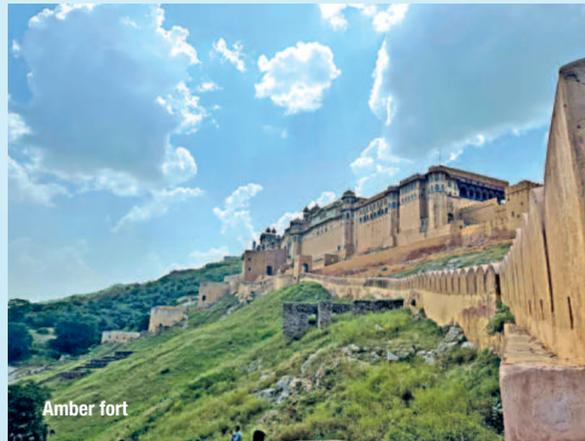
including the colorful pagari (turban). The turban, once a functional piece of clothing to keep cool in the desert heat, has now become a symbol of status in Rajasthan. We bought a few to take home, as a reminder of the journey.

Our next stop was the famed Amber Fort, about thirty minutes away, along a scenic drive through the Aravalli hills. These hills are dotted with forts and palaces, revealing how



Hawa Mahal from inside

the ancient rulers protected their lands from potential invaders. The fort itself rises majestically from the bank of Maota Lake. Visitors can either walk up the winding path to



Amber fort

Jantar Mantar, marvelling at the precision of the instruments, gave us a deep sense of how advanced this place was at that time.

Our last visit was to the City Palace, a stunning blend of Mughal and Rajput architecture that still serves as the residence of Jaipur's royal family. Built by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, the palace complex includes courtyards, gardens, and buildings, each more beautiful than the last. The craftsmanship is especially striking, from the ornate doorways to the frescoed arches of the pavilions. After visiting the palace museum and picking up a few souvenirs, we decided to rest for a bit before making our way back to Delhi.

Before heading to the hotel, we made a quick stop at Babu Bazar, a bustling market famous for its traditional Rajasthani attire. The market was a riot of colours, with dresses, clothes, and turbans printed with images of kings, queens, and elephants. We bought some souvenirs, taking in the vibrant atmosphere of the place. Exhausted but happy, we returned to the hotel for a brief rest before our return journey.

As we drove out of the city, I couldn't help but feel that a single day in Jaipur had barely scratched the surface of this captivating city. Its hospitality, architectural grandeur, and cultural richness left an indelible mark on me. There was so much more to see, to experience, to understand – enough to call for a second visit. But one thing was clear: Rajasthan's warmth and beauty had captured my heart, and I would return.

**TIPS FOR TRAVELLERS**  
Be prepared for a lot of walking, so wear comfortable shoes.

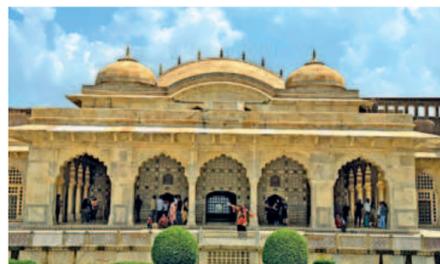
Visit between September and March for pleasant weather.

Allow at least two to three days to fully explore Jaipur's sights.

Renting a day-long taxi is a convenient way to visit all the main tourist spots.



Amber Palace



Sheesh Mahal



Amber Palace Gate

# TURNING THE TIDE

## Critical reforms to correct 15 years of misrule

### STAR BUSINESS REPORT

As Bangladesh enters a new era following the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government, which ruled over the nation for 15 years and is responsible for countless financial wrongdoings, the need of the hour is to reform the overall system of governance.

Nearly all sectors became corrupt in the hands of cronies who weaponised their political influence and carried out misdeeds, negatively impacting the economy.

In recent years, Bangladesh's economy has been under tremendous pressure due to fast-depleting foreign exchange reserves and stubbornly high inflation.

Alongside that, job creation is falling, income inequality is widening, GDP growth has slowed and the tax-to-GDP ratio has not registered an uptick.

The banking sector is struggling with a record level of non-performing loans while the stock market has remained sluggish due to a confidence crisis.

Additionally, the energy sector is eating up huge chunks of subsidies from government coffers, and there has been little progress in export diversification, with the RMG sector continuing to dominate the export basket.

However, the biggest hurdle to the overall business environment is the fact that corruption has permeated all facets of society, posing a significant barrier to attracting foreign investors.

After the political changeover, people's demands to implement reforms are at an all-time high. In fact, reforms are the primary demands of the people expected from the interim government.

The following is a sector-by-sector breakdown of planned reforms along with measures that experts suggest should be taken to restore good governance.

#### Reforming the banking sector

The banking sector has been debilitated by rampant corruption and irregularities over the past 15 years.

Non-performing loans (NPLs) have soared, with many banks now in the red due to scams executed by influential individuals who weaponised their political affiliations.

In 2008, when the Awami League won the first of four consecutive general elections, soured loans in the banking sector stood at Tk 22,480 crore.

By the end of June this year, the amount had soared to over Tk 200,000 crore, accounting for over 12 percent of the total disbursed loans in the banking system, as per Bangladesh Bank data.

Non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) are in a similarly fragile situation.

However, under newly-instated Governor Ahsan H Mansur, the central bank has moved quickly, reconstituting the board of directors of several troubled banks.

Furthermore, the interim government announcing its intention to fulfil a long-standing demand by forming a banking commission is expected to go a long way to restoring good governance to the sector.

Another measure, as revealed by the central bank governor, will be the formation of three task forces to ensure good governance.

However, there remain areas in urgent need of attention.

Industry insiders opined that forming new boards for troubled lenders would not be enough by itself.

The

new boards should be held accountable, such as by being asked to provide specific timeframes and plans to revive the ailing lenders, they said. The BB should then analyse the plans and gauge whether those measures alone will be enough.

Analysts said speeding up default loan recovery and bringing back laundered money should be prioritised.

They added that the central bank's focus should also be on NBFIs.

Exchange rate management, boosting forex reserves and reducing irregularities at banks are among the other challenges that the central bank must combat.

Ensuring full autonomy of the Bangladesh Bank and formulating a plan for the reduction of NPLs are also imperative.

Another piece of advice from experts is to prevent a single person or business from securing ownership at multiple banks.

#### Rebuilding confidence in stock market

The stock market of Bangladesh has been suffering from a dearth of investor confidence, chiefly stemming from a lack of good governance. As such, massive reforms are urgently required.

The interim government has made some changes to reverse the grim scenario, moving swiftly to appoint former top banker Khondoker Rashed Maqsood as the chairman of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC).

At the start of September, the BSEC also formed a five-member committee to investigate irregularities and corruption of the past.

It formed another committee specifically to investigate the market involvement and activities of Mohammad Saiful Alam and Salman FRahman - owners of controversial conglomerate S Alam Group and Beximco Group, respectively.

However, while the measures were appreciated, there remains a lot of ground to cover.

Experts believe the commission should first investigate the involvement of those within its ranks in illicit activities such as manipulation and punish them accordingly.

They added that the BSEC's main priority is to ensure the entry of good companies, meaning that quality initial public offerings (IPOs) should be prioritised.

In order to do so, they said the regulations regarding book-building methods must be revisited.

Additionally, it must ensure that all stakeholders and the regulator play a proper role in the IPO process.

Another long standing demand to attract good companies is to widen the tax gap between non-listed and listed companies.

At the same time, if any company ceases production for a long time, it should be delisted from the stock exchange.

They added that this is the best possible time to bring all profitable state-run companies to the stock market.

Along with that, the BSEC should monitor mutual funds stringently so general investors are attracted to such investments.

The BSEC should also decide to implement policy changes only after conducting thorough research.

Surveillance and monitoring should be strengthened to bring vibrancy back to the secondary market and reduce insider trading and other forms of manipulation.

Other suggestions include ensuring good quality financial reports and keeping track of intermediaries' activities so they cannot embezzle investor funds.

Most of all, the BSEC should not consider what impact its decision may have on the stock index. Its sole consideration when making decisions should be to ensure good governance.

Improving ease of doing business  
Alongside reforms that will

serve as a salve for certain ailing sectors, entrepreneurs also urged measures to improve the general business environment.

One key demand is to improve the ease of doing business, which would encourage more investment and result in more jobs.

They said the government can achieve this by focusing on curbing extortion at every level and removing bureaucratic tangles.

Another suggestion is to update commercial laws with the aim of fully digitalising processes relating to international trade, such as issuance of invoices and signing of contracts, to reduce the scope for fraudulence and money laundering.

Most businessmen, citing that they often had to pay bribes, also demanded massive reforms to service-oriented government entities like the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms, and the Department of Environment.

They also stressed the need for reforms to the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority.

**Fixing fragile trust in insurance industry**  
Insurance companies in Bangladesh have been struggling to take off owing to low confidence in the sector as a consequence of the low claim settlement ratio.

In Bangladesh, the claim settlement rate stood at 65.19 percent in 2023, according to data from the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (Idra).

This is far worse than the global average of 97-98 percent. In India, the claim settlement rate stood at 98.45 percent in the fiscal 2022-23, according to media reports.

The scenario grows even bleaker when one takes into consideration that over 26 lakh insurance policies have lapsed in the last 14 years.

The industry has also failed to grow. In fact, by some metrics, it has regressed. In 2009, the total number of policies stood at nearly 1.12 crore. That number fell to 85.88 lakh in 2023.

To raise confidence in this sector, the government should strengthen the regulator, experts said.

It should also conduct a thorough investigation to find how the insurance sector was corrupted and who is responsible for that.

The Idra should regularly monitor whether any insurer spends more than permissible limits as well as where they invest their funds.

If the government takes strict action against insurers in case of failure to settle claims, consumer confidence will be bolstered.

#### Ensuring transparency in energy sector

The most vociferous demand in terms of the energy sector has been the abolishment of the 'indemnity act', formally known as the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act 2010.

The interim government has already stopped using the act and also formed a committee to identify the nature of the deals signed by the previous government under this act.

Instead, the interim government began using Public Procurement Rules 2008 in importing liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Another common reform proposal regarding the sector is to strengthen the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, which was largely incapacitated by the previous government.

On December 1, 2022, the government issued an amendment to the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) Act, 2003, which empowered the power and energy ministry to set fuel and electricity prices under special circumstances.

Previously, prices could only be fixed by BERC through a process that included public hearings.

The interim government has already said they will not hike energy prices just by executive orders, skipping the public hearing.

However, energy sector experts pointed out numerous other areas that need to be reworked.

For example, the Integrated Energy and Power Master Plan (IEPMP) should be revised as there are faulty energy and power demand forecasts. It also encourages coal exploration and promotes LNG imports.

They further urged the government to review all procurement and bidding processes, phase out inefficient quick rental power plants, and prioritise the identification and assessment of renewable energy resources.

Analysts recommended forming a probe body to identify anomalies in pre-paid meters.

They also suggested restructuring the Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry to empower the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority and make it the sole authority to implement energy transition issues.

Some other proposals include establishing an 'Energy Sector Reform Commission', removing cadre officers from the managing bodies of energy-related companies, replacing top officials in power sector companies, limiting the ministry's role to policy regulation, ensuring government companies provide services without profit motives, and identifying and prosecuting corrupt officials.

#### Digitalising revenue collection

One repeated recommendation is to reform the National Board of Revenue through the establishment of two separate wings - one for policymaking and another for tax, customs duty and VAT collections.

Other suggestions include expanding the tax net, enabling online submission of income tax returns and fully digitalising the taxation process.

Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, said the biggest challenge is to increase the tax-GDP ratio, which stands at slightly less than 9 percent, to around 15 percent, which is typical of countries similar to Bangladesh's level of income. "This is daunting, even in

the medium term of 5 to 7 years, considering our history in revenue mobilisation. Most of the required increases will have to come from tax revenues," he said.

Rate hikes are extremely difficult when inflation is close to double digits and food inflation is even higher. The cost of doing business is also already excessive. So, the biggest challenge is to reduce leakage of tax revenues to third parties such as tax officials and expand the tax net, he said.

The budget for the current fiscal year reduced several tax exemptions and allowances, increased value-added tax (VAT) rates to the 15 percent statutory rate for several products, added a 30 percent slab for personal income exceeding Tk 20 lakh per annum and increased rates on select products like tobacco.

These must be maintained and implemented as the interim government revisits the budget.

The interim government has a unique opportunity to immediately reform tax policies and curb activities that create opportunities for "negotiation" and corruption.

The government has a commitment under an International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme to finalise the draft Medium and Long Term Revenue Strategy (MLTRS) along with a time-bound implementation framework by the end of December this year.

"We expect the MLTRS to come up with actionable measures to widen the tax net, improve compliance, reduce leakage and provide a road map for the digitalisation of tax collection," Hussain added.

#### Prioritising efficiency in public finance

Five key principles have been identified that should be taken into consideration for public finance management - enhancing the fiscal space, prioritising expenditure, prioritising foreign financing, ensuring good governance, and protecting the interests of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Any attempt to enhance the fiscal space should focus on generating more resources as well as sealing the leakages.

Austerity measures must be maintained in a way that their impact on the social safety net as well on health, education, agriculture, and small and medium enterprises becomes less burdensome.

Exit plans will need to be formulated in the cases of fiscal incentives currently being provided.

Considering the declining foreign exchange reserve situation, the government should prioritise implementing all foreign-funded projects under the Annual Development Programme.

It should place higher priority on implementing projects that are close to completion.

