

Hundreds of thousands of people attend the namaz-e-janaza of Sharif Osman Hadi, spokesperson of Inqilab Moncho and one of the frontliners of the July uprising, at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban after Zuhr prayers yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

A sea of mourners bids Hadi a hero's farewell

The young firebrand laid to rest beside National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam at DU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In an unprecedented show of grief and solidarity, hundreds of thousands of people filled the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises yesterday to bid farewell to Sharif Osman Hadi, the slain spokesperson of Inqilab Moncho and a key figure of the July uprising.

The vast 215-acre parliament complex could not hold the sea of mourners, with crowds spilling over onto the adjacent Manik Mia Avenue, one of the widest roads in the city.

The namaz-e-janaza of 32-year-old Hadi, the son of an imam, was held at the South Plaza, which resounded with "Allahu Akbar" yesterday afternoon. His coffin was draped in the national flag.

Speaking at the namaz-e-janaza, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus said Hadi is a martyr who will never be forgotten. He will remain alive through the lessons he left for the nation.

"Oh dear Osman Hadi, we have not come here to bid you farewell. You are

in our hearts, and as long as Bangladesh exists, you will remain in the hearts of all Bangladeshis. Insha'Allah, no one can remove you from there."

Addressing the crowd, Abdullah Al Jaber, member secretary of Inqilab Moncho, said, "The two revolutionary



lines of Kazi Nazrul Islam that Hadi used to think were his ideal were 'ami chiro bidrohi bir, ami bishwa chhariya uthiyachhi eka, chiro unnoto shir! [I am the rebel eternal, my head held high across the world, high, ever erect and

alone!"]

Calling for calm, he said, "Refrain from violence and don't act on any propaganda. We will announce our programmes soon."

Hadi's elder brother, Mawlana Abu Bakar Siddique, administered the namaz-e-janaza, which was attended by Religious Affairs Adviser AFM Khalid Hossain and other advisers; the chiefs of the three armed services; leaders of BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Inqilab Moncho, the National Citizens Party (NCP), among others.

Hadi was laid to rest beside the grave of his favourite poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam, near the Dhaka University Central Mosque, around 3:48pm.

He was known for his fiery recital of the national poet's "Bidrohi" poem.

In an interview, he once famously said, "A person can die, but an idea cannot."

It was that very idea -- of nation-building, of social change, of just democracy -- that will live on in the

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Hadi, you will be forever in our hearts: Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus pledged that the nation would follow July frontliner Sharif Osman Hadi's message of walking before the world with heads held high.

Speaking at Hadi's namaz-e-janaza at the South Plaza of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban in the capital, he said, "Oh dear Osman Hadi, we have not come here to bid you farewell. You are in our hearts, and as long as Bangladesh exists, you will remain



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ATTACKS ON STAR, PROTHOM ALO

Condemnations pouring in from home, abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National and international rights groups have urged the interim government to take immediate action to halt the wave of violence that followed the murder of July uprising frontliner Sharif Osman Hadi.

They said such "coordinated" attacks signal a dangerous spread of extremist and violent ideologies across the country.

They have called for prompt, impartial and transparent investigations into Hadi's killing and into those responsible for attacks on media houses, cultural organisations and other key institutions.

In a statement last night, Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) said that after Hadi's death, the offices of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo came under unprecedented attack, with vandalism and arson leaving journalists, staff and children at onsite daycare centres in a state of extreme insecurity.

ASK said obstruction of fire service personnel prevented the newspapers from publishing their print editions and forced the suspension of online operations, amounting to a direct and severe assault on press freedom.

The violence, it added, escalated further with the harassment of New Age Editor Nurul Kabir by a mob.

ASK also cited attacks on Chhayanaut, arson at the ruins of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence at Dhanmondi 32, demonstrations outside the Indian Assistant High Commissions in Rajshahi, Khulna and Chattogram, and the burning of an Awami League leader's home.

Together, the incidents, ASK said, pointed to "coordinated efforts to destabilise the country".

"Given these circumstances, ASK suggests that the state must deeply review why law enforcement and the army on duty were unable to ensure effective security at high-risk locations in a timely manner," the statement said.

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AK Khandker Deputy commander of Liberation War no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abdul Karim Khandker, former deputy commander of the Liberation War and the first chief of the Bangladesh Air Force, died yesterday from old-age complications at the age of 95.

Khandker, who was awarded Bir Uttam, had been undergoing treatment at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka since December 7 for multiple ailments, according to a press release from the Inter-Services Public Relations.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held tomorrow after Zuhr prayers at Bangladesh Air Force Base Bashar in Dhaka Cantonment. Following the janaza and state honours, he will be buried at the military graveyard.

During the Liberation War, Khandker, a retired vice marshal, played a pivotal role in organising the armed struggle. In March 1971, he was serving as a group captain at Dhaka Cantonment.

On May 15, 1971, he crossed into India with fellow officers, reaching Agartala in Tripura.

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Arrest the killers or face indefinite blockade

Inqilab Moncho issues 24hr ultimatum

DU CORRESPONDENT

Moncho has warned of an indefinite blockade at Shahbagh intersection if the government fails to arrest those behind the killing of Sharif Osman Hadi by this evening.

The ultimatum was announced after Hadi's funeral yesterday, when thousands of activists and members of socio-cultural and political

groups gathered at Shahbagh around 3:30pm.

Demonstrators blocked the area for nearly two hours, chanting slogans demanding justice for Hadi's killing.

At 5:15pm, Abdullah Al Jaber, member secretary of Inqilab Moncho, declared the ultimatum. He called for the resignation of the Home Adviser Lt Gen (Retd) Jahangir

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Thousands of activists and members of socio-cultural and political groups gather at Shahbagh intersection yesterday afternoon after Hadi's funeral. They blocked the area for nearly two hours, demanding justice for Hadi's killing.

PHOTO: STAR

UN secy gen condemns killing of Hadi

Urges calm

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for calm and urged all parties to exercise maximum restraint to ensure a peaceful environment ahead of Bangladesh's February elections, following a surge in violence triggered by the killing of a prominent youth leader.

Speaking at a briefing in New York on Friday, Guterres condemned the killing of Inqilab Moncho spokesperson Sharif Osman Hadi, a key figure in the July uprising, and extended his condolences to the victim's family.

He also called on the relevant authorities to carry out a prompt, impartial, thorough, and transparent investigation in line with international human rights standards.

7-year-old killed as BNP leader's house locked, set ablaze



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A seven-year-old girl was killed, and her father, a local BNP leader, along with two sisters, sustained severe burn injuries after their home was set ablaze in Lakshmipur Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The incident occurred around 1:00am in West Char Mansa village under Bhabaniganj union.

Ayesha Akter, 7, was trapped inside the house and died in the fire, said Wahid Parvez, officer-in-charge of Lakshmipur Sadar Model Police Station.

Her father, Belal Hossain, assistant organising secretary of BNP's Bhabaniganj union unit, and his daughters, Salma Akter Smriti, 18, a kindergarten teacher, and Samia Akter Bithi, 14, an eighth-grade student, suffered critical burns.

Belal is undergoing treatment at Lakshmipur

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Refrain from violence and don't act on any propaganda. We will announce our programmes soon.

Abdullah Al Jaber, member secretary of Inqilab Moncho, while speaking at the janaza of Osman Hadi

NOTICE

Due to severe disruptions caused by arson and vandalism targeting The Daily Star, we are compelled to limit today's edition to eight pages, continuing the reduced format from yesterday.

We are working tirelessly to restore full operations as soon as possible. We sincerely regret this inconvenience and thank you for your continued support and understanding.



Clockwise from left: Funeral attendees join janaza prayers with Sharif Osman Hadi's coffin placed before them. His body is then carried to the graveyard near Dhaka University Central Mosque. There, he was laid to rest beside National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. Later, thousands march to Shahbagh intersection for a sit-in demanding justice for Hadi's killing. The photos were taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTOS: CA PRESS WING, STAR

AK Khandker, deputy commander of Liberation War, no more

FROM PAGE 1
The following day, he met Liberation Army chief Ataul Gani Osmani and members of the government-in-exile, after which he was assigned the responsibility of deputy commander of the Liberation War.
He also played a leading role in forming the Bangladesh Air Force and was appointed coordinator of Operation Kilo Flight in late August 1971.
On December 16, during the surrender of Pakistani forces, he represented the Liberation Army in the absence of Colonel Osmani.
Following independence, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman appointed Khandker as the chief of the

reconstituted air force.
Khandker was appointed as the Bangladesh High Commissioner to Australia and served in the mission from 1976 to 1982. From 1982 to 1986, he was the Bangladesh High Commissioner in India.
In 1986, he was appointed adviser to the president, and thereafter he served as the planning minister until 1990. He was elected as a member of parliament in 1998 and 2009 from the Pabna-2 constituency.
In 2009, he was inducted as a full cabinet minister and given the charge of the planning ministry.
Born on January 1, 1930 in Rangpur, Khandker joined the

Pakistan Air Force in 1949.
He was survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter.
Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus expressed deep sorrow at his death, describing Khandker as an unforgettable soldier of Bangladesh's struggle for independence.
In the Liberation War of 1971, he played an important role in achieving the country's independence by demonstrating courage, foresight and leadership qualities. His strategic decisions, organisational skills and unwavering patriotism as Deputy Chief of Staff of the Mukti Bahini further consolidated the struggle for independence, Yunus added.

Condemnations pour in from home, abroad

FROM PAGE 1
Calling the interim government's limitations in protecting constitutional rights "regrettable", ASK warned, "If this cycle of violence is not stopped, it may result in a permanent crisis for human rights and the democratic space for future generations."
Amnesty International, in a post on X, urged the interim government to ensure prompt investigations into Hadi's killing and the subsequent mob violence, and to hold perpetrators accountable through fair trials, without resorting to the death penalty.
It also expressed alarm over the lynching of Hindu garment worker Dipu Chandra Das following allegations of blasphemy.
The US-based Committee to Protect Journalists said it was alarmed by reports of crowds vandalising and setting fire to the offices of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star.
"CPJ is monitoring the situation and urges Bangladeshi authorities to ensure the safety of news outlets and journalists, and to hold those responsible accountable."
UK-based rights body ARTICLE 19 said both newspapers have faced sustained threats from political, religious and cultural extremist groups in recent times.
The latest attacks, coming ahead of the February 12 election, reflect a deeply troubling escalation of hostility and violence against journalists and cultural practitioners, it said, noting that the attack on Chhayanaut mirrors a "broader surge in violence against cultural spaces and artists nationwide."
Such attacks, and the government's failure to prevent or respond effectively, stand in stark violation of Bangladesh's national and international commitments, ARTICLE 19 added.
The Broadcast Journalist Centre said the attacks on the two media

houses and the harassment of Nurul Kabir marked a severe deterioration in law and order and dealt a major blow to freedom of expression and independent journalism. "Such steps are reintroducing a culture of fear that shrinks the space for independent journalism," the statement said.
Meanwhile, Gono Odhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque Nur termed the attacks on media houses a "bad omen" for democracy. Visiting the offices of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, he called for resistance against those, at home and abroad, who instigated the violence.
"Exploiting our emotion and sentiment regarding the death of our struggling Osman Hadi, a group of misguided people carried out sabotage at several places, including the offices of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star," he said, alleging that the attacks were aimed at creating anarchy and instability to benefit a "third party".
Warning that government failure to prevent such incidents could delay the election, he added, "Without an elected government, it will not be possible to bring the country back on the right track." He also urged youths not to create unrest at anyone's provocation.
Bangladesh Sammilita Peshajibi Parishad, Chattogram, described the attacks on the media as "utterly unacceptable" and a direct blow to press freedom and the public's right to information, urging authorities to identify those involved, bring them to justice and ensure journalists' safety.
Chittagong University Journalists' Association said those who burn media offices and attack editors cannot claim even the minimum values of democracy.
Bangladeshi Journalists in International Media demanded immediate action. "Anything less will embolden further attacks and deepen

the culture of impunity," it said.
The Bashundhara Group also expressed deep concern and condemnation over the attacks. In a press release issued on behalf of Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, it said attacking journalists on duty is entirely unacceptable and contrary to freedom of expression and democratic principles. He demanded an immediate, fair and impartial investigation and exemplary punishment for those responsible.
Rights organisation Odhikar described the violence as an "attempt to sabotage the upcoming election through killings and vandalism", warning of a "bleak picture of a severe deterioration of the law and order situation" and an emerging culture of impunity.
It said that immediately after news of Hadi's death broke, certain individuals and groups carried out arson and vandalism at the offices of the two newspapers, Chhayanaut and Udichi, branding them parts of Indian hegemony. Odhikar also cited the assault on Nurul Kabir, the lynching of a Hindu garment worker, and the arson attack on the residence of International Crimes Tribunal prosecutor Tanvir Hasan Zoha.
"Odhikar believes that these killings, acts of sabotage and threats are deliberate attempts to derail the upcoming election," the group said.
It recommended arresting those involved in the murders of Hadi and the garment worker, pressing India to return the accused killers of Hadi, ensuring the safety of journalists, media outlets and dissenting voices, providing security to election candidates and July uprising leaders, strengthening intelligence activities and improving overall law and order.
"The government must remain extremely vigilant to ensure that no killings or acts of sabotage take place under the guise of violent extremism."

A sea of mourners bids Hadi farewell

FROM PAGE 1
minds of the mourners, who gathered at the Sangsad Bhaban premises.
Hadi had already won a place in people's hearts long before he announced his decision to contest the upcoming national election as an independent candidate from Dhaka-8.
It was during his campaign that he was shot in the head by an assassin on December 12.
The assailant was on a motorcycle that approached the rickshaw from behind and pulled up to the right side before the pillion rider fired at him point-blank.
He was first taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and later moved to Evercare Hospital as his condition deteriorated.
On December 15, he was airlifted to Singapore for advanced treatment. He breathed his last on Thursday night.
Yesterday, mourners from all walks of life prayed for the salvation of his departed soul, with many bursting into tears.
From noon onward, thousands began arriving in processions along Manik Mia Avenue -- some with flags and some with placards -- demanding justice for Hadi. By around 1:30pm,

the funeral ground and surrounding areas were completely packed with mourners.
BNP leader Salahuddin Ahmed and Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman were seen marching together to join the janaza.
The South Plaza and the entire Manik Mia Avenue witnessed scenes of mixed emotions, as some chanted slogans against fascism and hegemony, and demanded a trial for Hadi's killing.
They chanted slogans such as "We will all be Hadi for ages, we will fight" and "We will not let Hadi Bhai's blood go in vain".
Abbas Uddin, a 40-year-old businessman from Mirpur, said, "A single funeral is enough to show what kind of person Hadi was. I have never seen such a massive turnout at any funeral."
Many mourners described Hadi as outspoken, principled and firmly opposed to aggression, saying his honesty and moral clarity had drawn an unprecedented public response.
Many attendees termed Hadi's death an irreparable loss. Several noted that Hadi did not belong to, nor speak for, any political party -- something they called his greatest

strength.
A man who came from Mohakhali with his toddler son said he had underestimated the crowd. At one point, he climbed a small tree inside the parliament premises so that his child could see the proceedings.
Despite the weekend, metro stations from Kazipara onward were overwhelmed. At least three metro trains were so crowded that many passengers could not board. At the Farmgate Station, congestion was so severe that authorities allowed passengers to exit without punching tickets.
Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) deployed a large number of personnel, with 1,000 of them carrying body-worn cameras, said Muhammad Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner of the DMP's Media and Public Relations Division.
Twenty platoons of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) were also deployed across the capital, confirmed Md Shariful Islam, the public relations officer of the paramilitary force.
Equipped with body-worn cameras and riot control gear, they were stationed at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban and other key locations in the city

Hadi, you will be forever in our hearts

FROM PAGE 1
in the hearts of all Bangladeshis. Insha'Allah, no one can remove you from there."
Describing Hadi's message from National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam's "Bidrohi" -- "Bolo Bir, chiro unnoto momo shir!" (Say, O brave one, my head is held ever high!) -- as a lasting mantra for the nation, Prof Yunus said, "You have given us a mantra the nation will never forget. It will echo in our ears forever. With this mantra, we will prove ourselves in all our work. We will walk before the world with our heads held high. We will not bow before anyone."
"Millions of people have gathered here today [yesterday], more are coming in waves, while crores across Bangladesh and Bangladeshis living abroad are waiting for this moment to hear words spoken for and about Hadi."
Stressing that the gathering was not a farewell but a pledge, he said, "We have come to make a promise to you, Hadi -- we will fulfil what you have said."
He said the promise would not be limited to those present, but would be

carried forward across generations.
Recalling Hadi's values, the chief adviser said, "Your love for humanity, your way of living and interacting with people, and your political outlook are being praised by everyone. We are instilling them in our hearts and minds."
"You wanted to participate in the election and, in doing so, showed us how an election campaign should be conducted."
He noted that Hadi had demonstrated how to reach people respectfully, how to express views without infringing on the rights of others, and how to engage with dignity. "Today, we entrust you to Allah. Always remembering your words, we shall continue on the path of the nation's progress."
Hadi's brother Mawlana Dr Abu Bakar Siddique, who administered the final prayers, narrated how he chose the name of Hadi's son, now eight months old and left without a father.
"When his child was born, he told me, 'Brother, choose a name for my child that speaks of the

spirit of revolution, a name that bears the identity of courage.' After much deliberation, I named his child 'Firinas', meaning brave and revolutionary."
"Today, one cannot bear to look at his child's face."
Dr Siddique expressed his sole demand: that the trial of Hadi's assassins take place on Bangladeshi soil. "It has been seven to eight days [since the attack on Hadi]. If a murderer can shoot openly in broad daylight in the capital after Friday prayers and get away with it, there is nothing more shameful than this. If they crossed the border, how did they pass through during those five to seven hours? I leave this question to the nation."
Hadi was the youngest of his six siblings. "Osman, you have not died; you have left us driven to madness," cried his grieving brother.
Abdullah Ali Jaber, member secretary of Inqilab Moncho, founded by Hadi, said, "Have we come here to weep? What have we come here for? We have stood at this funeral today to take revenge for our brother's blood."

Arrest the killers or face indefinite blockade at Shahbagh

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Alam Chowdhury and Special Assistant to the
Chowdhury within 24 hours if they fail to clarify government action on the case.
Jaber outlined two demands: the arrest of all individuals involved in Hadi's murder, and the detention of alleged civil-military intelligence associates linked to the Awami League. He said the killing was the work of a syndicate and urged authorities to act immediately.
He claimed Hadi was not killed by one person. "There is an entire syndicate behind this. We do not view any political party with suspicion, but no political parties are beyond

suspicion. The struggle of Hadi is not only problematic for only Awami League, but several other political parties have problems with it."
He warned against defending the perpetrators and said those supporting them publicly must also face justice.
Jaber further alleged that conspiracies were underway to disrupt upcoming elections and ensure the Awami League's return to power.
He described Hadi as "the people's voice" and "a symbol of Bangladesh's independence and sovereignty."
He urged supporters to remain calm and avoid vandalism.
Earlier in the day, Sharif Osman

Hadi, spokesperson for Inqilab Moncho, was laid to rest beside national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam near the Dhaka University Central Mosque.
A prayer was offered at the graveside.
Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan, Pro-VC Prof Mamun Ahmed, Daily Amar Desh Editor Mahmudur Rahman, Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) Vice-President Abu Shadik Kayem, Inqilab Moncho leader Abdullah Al Jaber, National Citizen Party (NCP) Member Secretary Akhter Hossen and Chief Coordinator (South) Hasnat Abdullah, among others, were present at that time.

SUDAN DRONE ATTACK

Bodies of 6 peacekeepers return home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The bodies of six Bangladeshi peacekeepers, who were killed in a drone attack on a United Nations peacekeeping base in Sudan's Abyei region, were returned to Bangladesh yesterday.

Their remains reached Dhaka airport on an Emirates Airlines flight, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The Chief of General Staff of the Bangladesh Army, Lieutenant General Mizanur Rahman Shamim, received the bodies at the airport. Senior officials, including the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, the acting UN resident representative in Bangladesh, representatives of the UN mission in Abyei, the force commander of United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei, and senior military and civilian officials, were present.

A one-minute silence was observed, followed by a military salute in honour of the fallen peacekeepers.

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A one-minute silence followed by a military salute was observed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday, as the bodies of six Bangladeshi peacekeepers killed in a drone attack on a UN base in Sudan's Abyei region returned home yesterday.

Death anniversary of Fazle Hasan Abed observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The sixth death anniversary of Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, the visionary founder of BRAC, the world's largest non-governmental development organisation, was observed yesterday.

Abed passed away on December 20, 2019, aged 83 while receiving treatment in Dhaka.

Born in 1936, Abed studied accountancy in London and qualified as a cost management accountant in 1962. His life took a decisive turn during the 1970 cyclone and the 1971 Liberation War, events that reshaped his convictions while working for a multinational company in Pakistan.

He resigned and moved to London, helping establish "Action Bangladesh" and "HELP Bangladesh" to support the country's struggle for independence.

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Dengue cases cross 100,000

HELEMUL ALAM

With 70,402 dengue cases reported from divisions outside Dhaka out of a total 101,597 nationwide as of December 20, the mosquito-borne disease has spread far beyond the capital this year.

According to the DGHS, Barishal division recorded the highest number of cases at 21,410, followed by Dhaka division (outside the city corporations) with 17,245 cases. Chattogram ranked third with 14,815 cases.

Within Dhaka city, DGHS data show 16,795 cases in Dhaka North City Corporation and 14,428 cases in Dhaka South City Corporation areas.

Entomologist Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University said dengue spreads in waves and becomes uncontrollable when authorities fail to break any part of the epidemiological triangle.

"The host, the agent, and the environment — right now we have failed in all three areas. Mosquito control is weak, dengue patients are not being isolated properly, and environmental conditions remain

unchanged. As long as these factors persist, dengue will continue to spread," he said.

He stressed the need for effective mosquito control and stronger surveillance.

Local government bodies responsible for mosquito control must be strengthened with skilled and trained manpower, he said.

Bashar also called for specialised dengue wards in every district hospital, staffed by doctors trained in dengue management.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman said authorities lack modern and incentive-friendly tools such as *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti) and other larvicides widely used elsewhere.

"Fogging alone is ineffective and does not reach inside homes properly. There are no targeted efforts to control Aedes mosquitoes," he said.

Last year, dengue cases crossed 100,000, and this year the figure has again exceeded that mark.

"If this trend continues, cases could reach millions in the coming years," Rahman said.

Zubaida leaves for London ahead of Tarique's return

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Zubaida Rahman, the wife of BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, left for London yesterday, planning to return to Bangladesh with her husband and daughter Zaima Rahman.

She departed Dhaka at 8:30am on Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight BG-201 from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Zubaida arrived in Dhaka from London on December 5 to be with her mother-in-law, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who has been undergoing treatment at Evercare Hospital.

As a member of Khaleda Zia's medical board, she has been staying at the hospital round the clock, overseeing the treatment process.

Meanwhile, BNP has started preparing for the "historic reception" of its acting chairman Tarique, following his 17 years in exile. He is expected to arrive on December 25 morning with his family, the party said.

Upon arrival, he is scheduled to visit Evercare Hospital to see his mother Khaleda Zia before heading to his

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'Ensure justice for Osman Hadi'

Sommilito Nagorik Somaj condemns attacks on media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sommilito Nagorik Somaj, a coalition of civil society organisations, yesterday demanded a transparent investigation and exemplary punishment of those responsible for the killing of Sharif Osman Hadi.

The group also condemned recent violent attacks on media houses, cultural institutions and individuals.

At a press conference at Jatiya Press Club, speakers described the killing as a serious threat to political stability and democratic transition in the country. They alleged that the interim government has failed to ensure public safety even more than a year after the July uprising.

The speakers condemned what they called planned terrorist attacks carried out on the night of December 18 on Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, Chhayanaut and Nalanda School.

Journalists were inside the buildings during the arson attacks, forcing several to take shelter on rooftops to save their lives. They also alleged that women journalists were assaulted while leaving the premises.

The civil society leaders further condemned attacks on Udichi's office and the Indira Gandhi

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'Interim govt failed to prevent attack'

Udichi leaders say at protest march

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Gosthi, a social and cultural organisation, yesterday accused the interim government of failing to prevent attack and arson at its central office despite clear threats made a day before.

"The government has moved away from the spirit of the July uprising and is effectively appeasing fundamentalist forces," Udichi general secretary Amit Ranjan Dey said while addressing a protest march in the morning.

Udichi's artistes and activists as well as cultural workers and journalists, brought out the procession around 11:00am from Paltan intersection, which ended in front of the organisation's central office, opposite to the Jatiya Press Club at Satyen Sen Square on Topkhana Road.

Udichi Central Committee vice president Shibani Bhattacharyya presided over the event.

Speakers demanded immediate action against those responsible for the attack. They linked the attack on Udichi to a broader threat against freedom of expression.

"Our office was vandalised, looted, and torched in the same manner as attacks on The Daily Star,

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Abolish NTMC

FROM PAGE 8

Detailed accounts of NTMC's alleged abuses have also emerged through court proceedings and the Commission of Inquiry on enforced disappearances formed by the government, which is why there has been a strong demand for the agency's complete dissolution, the statement said.

According to media reports cited by the signatories, divisions have emerged within the government over whether to abolish the NTMC, indicating a retreat from plans for comprehensive surveillance reform.

Without meaningful citizen participation, a new draft law was prepared on October 15 proposing three alternative names for the NTMC.

The draft was prepared by the NTMC itself with the aim of strengthening, rather than dismantling, its surveillance capacity, according to the statement.

The statement also referred to a November 17 meeting of the law and order core committee, where the head of an agency reportedly claimed that surveillance capabilities were being weakened, which would make it difficult to monitor threats to national sovereignty.

Following this, the home affairs adviser reportedly instructed that a meeting be convened on the Telecommunication Ordinance.

The citizens warned that at least

two key citizen-protection provisions from the published draft will be removed in a new version expected to be placed next week, without public consultation.

They expressed concern that the Home Affairs Ministry is seeking to centralise control over surveillance, which they said could recreate the surveillance powers exercised during the previous government.

They also criticised proposed changes that would weaken transparency and accountability, including the removal of mandatory public reporting on surveillance requests and the dilution of plans for an independent, quasi-judicial oversight council involving citizens and judges.

The signatories demanded that internet services must never again be shut down or restricted, that the NTMC be dismantled and that officials involved in surveillance be held accountable through judicial oversight.

They urged the chief adviser and the government to approve the draft ordinance prepared with public participation, ensuring that post-uprising Bangladesh does not return to past practices of repression.

The statement was signed by prominent figures including TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman, economist Anu Muhammad, philosopher Salimullah Khan, and writers, academics, journalists and human rights activists.

Putin still intends to capture all of Ukraine

Say US intelligence reports as Trump's peace push gathers pace

AGENCIES

US intelligence reports continue to warn that Russian President Vladimir Putin intends to capture all of Ukraine and reclaim parts of Europe that belonged to the former Soviet empire, six sources familiar with US intelligence said, even as negotiators seek an end to the war that would leave Russia with far less territory.

BNP blames govt inaction for spate of attacks

FROM PAGE 8

"We have met with the government multiple times, urging them to take necessary steps to maintain law and order, but no visible action has been taken," a BNP leader said.

Echoing these concerns yesterday, Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said a "long-identified vested quarter" is deliberately pushing Bangladesh towards chaos to impose "a new form of fascism".

Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed called for vigilance to prevent political exploitation of Hadi's killing. "We have strongly condemned this brutal killing. But fallen fascist forces or anyone trying to disrupt the election must not be allowed to use this incident for political gain. Everyone must remain vigilant," he said.

Govt urges Meta to act against violence-inciting content

FROM PAGE 8

working to restore order and prepare for credible national elections.

The BTRC alleged that social media, "especially Facebook," has been used to incite "large-scale violence, intimidation, and calls for the disruption of the upcoming elections."

Referring to recent incidents, the letter said the situation escalated after the death of Usman Hadi, a key figure in the uprising, alongside attacks on media institutions.

"Most alarmingly, in the name of freedom of expression, some individuals aligned with different ideologies publicly expressed approval of his death, while others openly called for violence against media institutions and journalists," it said.

The regulator said such calls contributed to vandalism and arson at several installations, including two media houses — The Daily Star and Prothom Alo.

Expressing concern over delays by Meta in removing or blocking such content, the letter warned that the unchecked circulation of such

content poses a direct threat to national stability, social harmony, media freedom, and the safety of minority groups.

The BTRC also noted that Meta has no local office in Bangladesh and that "multiple urgent requests sent through formal channels did not receive timely responses, while violent content continued to circulate widely."

The commission urged Meta to strictly and swiftly enforce its community standards, strengthen Bengali-language moderation, ensure "immediate action on reported content that incites violence," and heighten monitoring of Bangladesh-related content at least until the national election scheduled for February 2026.

"This is a matter of national importance," the letter said, linking the election to citizens' lives, democratic rights, minority safety, and long-term stability.

Meanwhile, the government-run National Cyber Security Agency sent a similar letter to Meta yesterday.

NDF President Anisul's home attacked, set ablaze

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTG

The ancestral home of Anisul Islam Mahmud, president of the National Democratic Front and chairman of a faction of the Jatiya Party, was vandalised and set on fire by a group of miscreants in Chattogram's Hathazari upazila early yesterday.

No casualties were reported as none were inside the house, located in Gumanmardan, during the attack around 12:15am, police said.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Kazi Tarek Aziz, additional superintendent of police of Hathazari Circle, said, "A few cooks

and domestic helpers were preparing for a scheduled family programme in the yard of the residence. At that time, around 40 unidentified youths arrived in private cars, microbuses and motorcycles, entered the premises and started vandalising the house. They set the house on fire and left after around 15 minutes."

Locals, with assistance from the fire service, extinguished the blaze.

"On receiving information, police visited the spot and spoke to witnesses. Our teams are working to identify and trace the attackers. We have advised the family to lodge a complaint," he added.

Celebrating empathy and kindness

FROM PAGE 8

The congress was attended by participants from diverse professional backgrounds. The programme began with the national anthem performed by children with deafness, blindness and intellectual disabilities.

Valerie Ann Taylor was born on February 8, 1944, in Bromley, Kent, United Kingdom. A Fellow of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, she first came to Bangladesh in 1969 with Voluntary Service Overseas to work as a physiotherapist at the Christian Hospital in Chandraghona, in the hill tracts.

In 1973, she went back to England to raise funds to establish a rehabilitation centre for people with paralysis. She returned to Bangladesh in 1975, and CRP admitted its first patients in 1979.

During this period, she worked at Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital in Dhaka. CRP initially operated from two cement storerooms on the hospital premises before relocating permanently to Savar in mid-1990, where its head office remains.

Valerie received the Order of the British Empire in 1995, the Arthur Eyre Brook Gold Medal in 1996, and the Bangladesh Independence Award

in 2004. She was granted Bangladeshi citizenship in 1998.

She has served as the legal guardian of two Bangladeshi girls, Poppy and Jyoti. Valerie lives near the CRP Savar campus with her younger adopted daughter, Poppy, while Jyoti works at CRP and was married in 2007.

Meanwhile, The Moralogy Foundation, established in August 1926 by Dr Chikuro Hiroike, is a Japanese research and educational organisation.

It promotes social education based on the principles of "morology," a concept developed by Hiroike that compares conventional and supreme morality to demonstrate the impact of moral practice. The philosophy aims to promote human well-being, global happiness and world peace.

In his welcome address, Prof Matur Rahman Molla, president of the congress, highlighted Bangladesh's resilience despite poverty and natural disasters and called for stronger international cooperation to support vulnerable communities.

Prof Rubaiul Murshed delivered the keynote presentation at the event.

The programme also marked the launch of the book *Why Kindness Matters*.

Goodbye to a firebrand—Sharif Osman Hadi

We demand justice for his murder

The thousands of people who turned up at Shangshad Bhaban, for the state funeral of Sharif Osman Hadi, a co-founder and spokesperson of Inquilab Moncho and an independent candidate for Dhaka 8 in the upcoming national elections, speaks volumes of the extent of his influence and the depth of the grief he has left behind. An important figure of the student-led July uprising of 2024, he became prominent as a unique, fearless voice speaking for the ordinary people of Bangladesh. We mourn the loss of this young man, who vehemently spoke against authoritarianism and the corruption it produced. He was unapologetic about his views and communicated them with passion and candidness.

His importance has been aptly recognised by the chief adviser in his address to the nation and the announcement of a one-day state mourning on Saturday following his untimely death. The national flag was flown at half mast at all government, semi-government, educational institutions and private buildings. Special prayers have been organised in all mosques across the country as well as other places of worship.

On December 12, Hadi suffered critical head injuries when assailants on a motorbike shot at him while he was travelling in a battery-operated rickshaw in Purana Paltan area. He was first taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, then to Evercare Hospital and later airlifted to Singapore on December 15 for advanced treatment. But despite all efforts, Hadi could not be saved leaving his child without a father and his wife a widow. Although suspects have been identified, they have not been apprehended yet.

Known for his fiery speeches and straightforward attitude, Hadi was also a private university teacher and a poet, greatly inspired by national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, next to whose grave he was laid to rest. He was unique in his simplicity and straightforwardness. His followers were beguiled by the warmth he extended to them and his genuine interest in listening to their struggles. He was a champion of youth and their aspirations.

While mourning his loss we must, as a nation, confront the painful questions about the safety of political actors and engagement, the protection of dissenting voices. The brazenness with which he was targeted and left with fatal injuries, is a severe blow to our democratic aspirations and in particular the security situation surrounding the upcoming elections. We demand that the government conduct the investigation of this murder with extreme rigour and fairness so that the assailants are brought to book and the conspiracy behind his killing is revealed.

For now, we express our sorrow and condolences to Hadi's loved ones and countless supporters. Rest in power, Hadi.

When waste becomes threat, not nuisance

Bangladesh's waste problem is a public health emergency

Bangladesh's waste crisis has long ceased to be a mere civic inconvenience; it has become a serious environmental and public health emergency. Across cities and towns, waste generation continues to outpace both the capacity and the commitment of authorities to manage it sustainably. That failure is laid bare in Thursday's front-page photograph of this daily: a vast mound of garbage dumped along the roadside at the entrance to Rangamati town. Local authorities admit that around 30 to 40 tonnes of waste from the town are discarded daily in this open space, sliding down hillsides and polluting nearby streams and ultimately Kaptai Lake.

Over the years, media reports have repeatedly shown how municipal and tourism-related waste is dumped on hill slopes and along lake banks, despite official assurances of proper disposal. During the monsoon, this waste contaminates vital water sources, triggering waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera, as confirmed by local health officials. Now, the gateway to one of the country's most scenic tourist destinations has become an indicator of administrative neglect.

Sadly, across the country, the dominant approach to handling waste remains dumping rather than treatment, with little attention paid to reduction, segregation, recycling or recovery. Dhaka, for instance, generates nearly 7,000 tonnes of waste every day and only about 37 percent of waste is collected regularly. The rest clogs drains, contaminates water bodies, burns in open air or accumulates in landfills already close to collapse. Besides, landfills such as Aminbazar and Matuail are dominated by mixed waste and lack proper leachate and gas management systems. Medical and industrial waste are frequently disposed of alongside household refuse, significantly increasing the risks of toxic exposure and disease. Despite spending around Tk 3,323 crore on waste management over the last seven years, hundreds of uncontrolled dumping sites continue to operate across the capital. Financial allocations, in the absence of systemic reform, have delivered little meaningful improvement. This situation does not stem from a lack of awareness, but from chronic deficiencies in planning, enforcement and political priority.

The way forward requires a decisive shift away from the linear "take-make-dump" model towards a circular and sustainable system. Waste reduction must be prioritised, segregation made mandatory, organic waste composted, recycling industries strengthened, and hazardous materials treated safely. Without urgent, coordinated and accountable action, waste will continue to degrade our landscapes and water bodies, while steadily eroding public trust in governance. Also, we cannot allow the scenic terrains and tourist sites of the country to drown in heaps of waste.

The press under fire, and the cost of mistaking destruction for change



A CLOSER LOOK

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her X handle is @tasneem_tayeb.

TASNEEM TAYEB

The image of a burnt copy of *The Daily Star*, dated Victory Day, is difficult to shake off. It stays with you long after you scroll past it on your social media newsfeed—not because it is dramatic, but because of what it reveals.

Bangladesh was born through fire and grit. Liberation came through sacrifice, endurance, and an extraordinary capacity to resist injustice. Today, that same fire appears to be consuming us from within. What once signified defiance now risks becoming a force of self-destruction.

Ours is not a society unfamiliar with rage. Years of political repression, shrinking civic space, and the erosion of trust in public institutions have created an environment where frustration runs deep. In such circumstances, arson and vandalism can feel like acts of defiance—providing

the case in our country—this role played by the press becomes even more crucial. Undermining the press does not return power to the powerless; it concentrates power further in the hands of those already powerful.

The burning of *The Daily Star* and *Prothom Alo* buildings is particularly troubling because it goes beyond violence. Acts like these risk destroying years of journalistic documentation—records of a nation's history, political decisions, social struggles, and civil society debates that cannot simply be retrieved. When archives are lost, it is not a newspaper alone that suffers; society loses part of its collective memory.

The events of the early hours of December 19 should also force a reckoning with how public anger, particularly among the



The image of a burnt copy of *The Daily Star* is deeply unsettling and is difficult to shake off.

PHOTO : PALASH KHAN

momentary relief and a fleeting sense of power in a system that often feels tone deaf and unresponsive.

But we must understand, that sense of power is only illusory.

Destruction and vandalism have never dismantled unjust systems. They have only made it easier for those systems to tighten their grip on the people, on the society, on the same very systems, often in the name of control and so-called stability. When anger is channelled through violence and destruction, the result is not reform but regression—sometimes to conditions worse than those we sought to escape.

Unfortunately, the press is almost always among the first to bear the brunt of any form of anger from any quarter. Politicians uncomfortable with too much scrutiny, criminals and corrupt activities exposed by investigative journalism, powerful lobbyists threatened by transparency—all have, at different times, undermined and attacked the fourth estate. Increasingly, however, the press is also being targeted by the public itself, accused of perceived bias, complicity, or failure.

Criticism of the media is not only legitimate; it is necessary. No newsroom should be above scrutiny. But there is a thin line between critique and silencing. Crossing that line weakens democratic rights rather than strengthening them.

The press exists as the fourth estate precisely because it questions power, documents history, and preserves public memory. As a photojournalist colleague grieved not only the loss of his workplace, but the loss of thousands of images—fragments of our collective history—consumed by the fire, it underscored the irreplaceable role of the press in preserving public memory.

In contexts where other accountability mechanisms are weak or compromised—as is often

youth, is being directed. Young people in Bangladesh have shown indomitable courage, resilience, and a remarkable willingness to challenge entrenched power. That perseverance is necessary. But they must understand, anger—on its own—is not a political instrument for justice or democracy. Violence against any institution—and especially those that serve as checks on power—risks entrenching the very conditions that generate the anger in the first place. It is worth asking whether such acts bring us any closer to accountability, or whether they simply leave us more exposed to the machinations of political systems that remain deeply flawed and corrupt.

The image of a Victory Day newspaper reduced to ash is deeply unsettling. Bangladesh's independence was not achieved through blood and fire alone, but through a commitment to justice, equal rights, and democratic values. Turning that legacy inward, against platforms that seek to question power and record the truth, is not resistance. It is a self-defeating act driven by recklessness.

The Daily Star building may have been burnt—my old workstation perhaps charred. But the values on which it was built have not been erased. Journalism without fear or favour does not reside in walls, computers, or printing presses. It lives in professional norms, institutional practices, and a shared belief that truth matters.

The press in Bangladesh has endured pressure, intimidation, and attacks before. And for sure, it will face them again. But it will also regroup and reemerge—because there is no other mechanism capable of even partially equalising power in a deeply unequal society, such as ours.

Fire can destroy buildings. It cannot build a progressive future. As for *The Daily Star*, we will come back: stronger, bolder, and more united than ever.



Losing Hadi is like losing a compass because his courage gave language to frustrations many of us were too scared to name.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Hadi's death will haunt us forever



Maisha Islam Monamee recently graduated from the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) at the University of Dhaka and is a contributor at The Daily Star.

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

In July 2024, we, the Gen-Z, stepped into the streets, frightened yet resolute, wounded yet unwilling to break, because we believed Bangladesh could be rewired around dignity. We believed that power could no longer be exercised through a gun or the shadow of intimidation. And we believed that violence would finally lose its legitimacy as a political language. Sharif Osman Hadi's death shattered that belief.

Hadi, a man whose integrity felt like an act of rebellion in itself, died from bullets in broad daylight. He was killed in full view of the nation he tried to uplift. He is now a martyr to Bangladesh, a country which was not ready to protect him. His death feels like a personal tragedy that should haunt us for the rest of our lives. I do not speak on behalf of his political community. But I speak as a Bangladeshi who recognises that the bullet that ended his life tore through the promise of July. We said never again, and yet here we are, as if July was a mere fever dream rather than a turning point. Hadi embodied that change, and he died in the most preventable and brutal way. If July was supposed to redraw the boundaries of the nation, then Hadi's death shows those boundaries have been violated in broad daylight.

Political violence is not random. It often sends a deliberate message. It tells you who is allowed to participate and who is meant to be silenced. It tells you which voices are considered inconvenient enough to eliminate. And more than that, it tells you that the fundamental promise of July—building a political environment grounded in accountability, justice, and moral courage—is already corroded. Those of us who believed in that promise are left asking ourselves uncomfortable questions. Did we overestimate our collective strength? Did we underestimate the forces that thrive on chaos and fear? Or did we fail to realise that revolutions do not end on the day the crowds disperse? The real fight begins only when systems try to reassert the old order.

Hadi's death sends a clear message: anyone who dares to imagine a politics built on courage, honesty, and moral clarity will be confronted with the oldest instrument of power in this region. Hadi spoke the truth with a steadiness that unsettled the corrupt. He terrified those who depend on intimidation to survive. And so they killed him. But if history teaches us anything, it is that a man can be killed, but his ideas cannot. Not when they grow roots in the collective conscience of many youths. Did we fail him? Because revolutions lose when

we forget to defend the values we once bled for. The systems we thought we had defeated were not gone; they were lurking. And when the moment came, they found Hadi unprotected. His death forces us to confront the reality that our transformation was merely declared, not realised.

It is important to realise that we cannot rebuild Bangladesh on the scaffolding of fear. We cannot claim to pursue democracy while normalising brutal crimes. And we cannot build a future where honesty and integrity become liabilities. Our generation owes itself greater courage than that. We owe ourselves a politics worthy of the risks we took. We owe Bangladesh a commitment to stand against violence with the same unanimity and moral clarity that defined our uprising.

As Hadi was laid to his final rest yesterday, I remembered the man we lost, who, for many of our generation, was a

Hadi's death sends a clear message: anyone who dares to imagine a politics built on courage, honesty, and moral clarity will be confronted with the oldest instrument of power in this region. Hadi spoke the truth with a steadiness that unsettled the corrupt. He terrified those who depend on intimidation to survive. And so they killed him. But if history teaches us anything, it is that a man can be killed, but his ideas cannot.

symbol of principle in a landscape where principles are often liabilities; he was brave and sincere. Losing someone like him is like losing a compass. It is because his courage gave language to frustrations many of us were too scared to name. Because he made us believe that maybe the future was not a myth; it was inching towards us.

This should haunt us forever. This death feels personal, national, generational, and foundational. And if we do not confront that fracture, if we do not let this loss change us, then we will lose far more—the future he died trying to build. And that is something we cannot afford to do.



Yesterday, thousands of people turned up at Shangshad Bhaban for the state funeral of Sharif Osman Hadi.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer (RHD)

Road Division, Pirojpur

E-mail: pirdivisionrhd@gmail.com

Memo No. 35.01.7980.462.07.001.20-3233
Date: 18/12/2025

Tender Notice (Open Tendering Method, NCT)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal for the following works:

Tender ID & Package No.	1195146, 04/e-GP/PRHD/PMP-Major/Bridge/2025-2026
Name of tender	Construction of 37.920m (1x36.58) Long P.C Girder "Kochuakati Bridge" at 43rd Km (Ch: 42+103m) of Goriarpar-Banaripara-Sharshina-Swarupkathi-Kawkhali-Naikathi (Z-8033) Road under Pirojpur Road Division during the year 2025-2026.
Tender last selling date and time	14-January-2026 & Time 16:00
Tender closing & opening date and time	15-January-2026 & Time 12:00
Tender/proposal document price (in BDT)	5,000.00 (Five Thousand only)
Tender/proposal security (amount in BDT)	33,00,000.00 (Thirty-Three lakh only)

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). For more details please contact e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Tanvir Ahmed
ID No. 602308
Executive Engineer (C.C.), RHD
Road Division, Pirojpur

star BUSINESS



Foreign stock investors keep pulling out funds

They sold more shares than they bought amid political uncertainty, weak banks, and a lack of promising companies

AHSAN HABIB

Foreign investors pulled more money out of the stock market in the first four months of fiscal year (FY) 2025-26, as political uncertainty made them cautious about putting fresh funds into shares.

Net foreign investment in listed stocks stood at minus \$66 million during the July-October period, according to Bangladesh Bank (BB) data, meaning overseas investors sold more shares than they bought.

In the same four-month period a year earlier, net outflows were much smaller at minus \$9 million.

Market insiders say concerns over the financial sector have added to uncertainty around the country's political landscape.

Saiful Islam, president of the DSE Brokers Association of Bangladesh (DBA), said foreign investors are worried that stress in parts of the banking sector could spread more widely.

He said only four to five banks are relatively stable, while the rest are under pressure. This has weakened confidence in financial stocks.

The central bank is merging five listed banks after their conditions were found beyond

repair. The BB is also working on liquidating nine non-bank financial institutions, eight of which are listed. These developments have added to investor nervousness.

At the same time, Islam said high inflation has hurt consumer spending, limiting the earnings potential of consumer goods companies and reducing their appeal to foreign funds.

According to him, foreign investors have also found limited reasons to stay in the market due to a lack of new and attractive companies. "Some listed firms are performing reasonably well, but many have weak dividend records," said Islam, also a director of the BRAC EPL Stock Brokerage.

Most of all, no large, well-run companies have entered the market in recent times, which could draw fresh foreign interest, he added.

In the last one year, no initial public offering (IPO) has been approved, although the chief adviser of the interim government in May asked the authorities for listing state-owned enterprises.

Islam, whose brokerage house deals with foreign investments, also pointed to poor communication and weak governance at many

listed firms.

Foreign investors often do not get timely updates or meaningful access to company management, which discourages long term investment.

Meanwhile, some other market operators say foreign investors are cautious partly because of earlier policy moves that disrupted trading.

Mohammed Rahmat Pasha, chief executive and managing director of UCB Stock Brokerage, said the political atmosphere around the next national elections is a key concern.

"Until a democratically elected government takes charge, most long-term foreign investors prefer to stay away," he said, citing fears of unrest and sudden economic disruptions.

According to Pasha, investors are also still wary after the imposition of floor prices in 2020 and again in 2022, which kept prices artificially high. The policy made much of the market illiquid, as many shares became hard to trade.

As a result, foreign investors faced losses and compliance issues with their own regulators, who discourage investment in illiquid markets, said the UCB Stock Brokerage MD.

He said that although floor prices were lifted after the new commission took office in August last year, confidence has yet to fully return.

The BB data show foreign investors pulled out \$150 million from the stock market in FY 2024-25. The outflows in FY 2023-24 amounted to \$343 million.

Nearly half of Bangladeshis remain offline: BBS

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Nearly half of the population of Bangladesh is still without internet access, according to the latest official data, a situation that IT professionals describe as disappointing when compared with neighbouring countries.

Despite more than a decade of rapid expansion in online and smartphone-based services, experts argue that high data costs, driven by heavy taxation, are the primary reason for the poor performance.

By the end of September this year, 48.9 percent of people aged five and above were direct internet users, according to a quarterly report by the state-run Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

In other words, the BBS report on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) usage means 51.1 percent of the population remained offline during the same period.

"The performance is actually worse than that of our neighbouring countries," said AKM Fahim Mashroor, former president of the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS).

At the household level, just over half of homes – about 56 percent – had at least one internet user in the July-September period, according to the report released on Wednesday.

The BBS survey covered 61,632 households nationwide and is aimed at informing national ICT policy as well as international platforms such as the International Telecommunication Union and the SDG Tracker.

According to the findings, 50.4 percent of households were online in the July-September quarter, down from 55.1 percent at the end of fiscal year 2024-25.

This means that around half of citizens remain digitally excluded, even as online services increasingly shape access to education, healthcare, finance and government support.

Mashroor described the findings as "extremely disappointing for Bangladesh", adding that the high cost of data is the main barrier. In India, more than 70 percent of the population is online, while in Pakistan, the figure exceeds 60 percent.



Ctg customs' Jul-Nov revenue jumps 9% but misses target

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Chattogram customs house, the country's largest revenue-collecting entity, posted a 9 percent year-on-year rise in revenue in the first five months of the current fiscal year, but still fell short of its target.

The house collected Tk 31,602 crore in revenue during the period, up from Tk 29,001 crore in the corresponding months of the previous fiscal year, according to official data.

Despite the increase, revenue collection was 13 percent below the target of Tk 36,260 crore set for the period.

Officials attributed the shortfall to reduced imports of certain goods and the impact of government duty exemption policies, which limited revenue growth.

Data showed that imports rose sharply during the period, increasing by 63.97 lakh tonnes, or 18.47 percent year-on-year.

According to the National Board of Revenue (NBR), total imports during the first five months of the current fiscal year stood at 4.10 crore tonnes of goods worth Tk 2.22 lakh crore, up from 3.46 crore tonnes valued at Tk 1.97 lakh crore a year earlier.

Around 4,500 types of products are imported through the Chattogram customs house. But nearly 45 percent of total customs revenue comes from just 30 key items, including diesel, palm oil, coal, apples, grapes, oranges, dates, crushed stone, cement clinker, steel products, and powdered milk.

Mohammad Tafsir Uddin Bhuyan, additional commissioner of the Chattogram customs house, said higher imports of food items ahead of Ramadan

helped boost revenue collection.

Stricter monitoring to curb import irregularities and quicker completion of auction procedures also contributed to the increase.

"We are hopeful of achieving our revenue target if this momentum continues over the remaining months of the fiscal year," he told The Daily Star.

Bhuyan also said several measures have been taken to boost revenue collection, including preparing a list of importers and clearing and forwarding agents previously found to be evading taxes in order to intensify scrutiny of their consignments.

Govt's treasury bill borrowing up 4.3% in Nov

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government increased its borrowing through short-term treasury bills in November, issuing Tk 31,289.13 crore worth of the instruments, a 4.3 percent rise from October, according to data from Bangladesh Bank (BB).

Treasury bills are short-term loans that the government takes from banks and other financial institutions to meet immediate funding needs. They are sold through auctions conducted by the central bank and are considered one of the safest investment options in the financial system.

BB's Money Market Dynamics report shows that four such auctions were held in November. The average interest rates paid by the government stood at 9.99 percent for 91-day bills, 10.03 percent for 182-day bills, and 10.01 percent for 364-day bills.

The interest rate, known as the cut-off rate, is the highest rate the government agrees to pay in an auction and reflects demand for the bills as well as overall liquidity conditions in the banking system.

For the 91-day treasury bills, the cut-off rate fell during the first three weeks of November, reaching a low of 10.07 percent, before edging up to 10.14 percent in the final auction.

According to the BB report, the rate in the first auction of the month was 10 basis points lower than the previous one.

In the case of 182-day bills, the cut-off rate jumped by 30 basis points in the second week of the month but declined gradually in the remaining auctions.

By contrast, interest rates on 364-day treasury bills rose steadily throughout November, climbing from 9.99 percent to 10.25 percent by the final auction.

Farmers of early potato varieties hit by old stock glut



Farmers harvest early varieties of potatoes at Nayapara village in Mominpur union of Rangpur Sadar upazila. Despite good yields, growers say prices remain depressed due to an oversupply of old stock, forcing many to sell below production costs.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

SUKANTA HALDER and S DILIP ROY

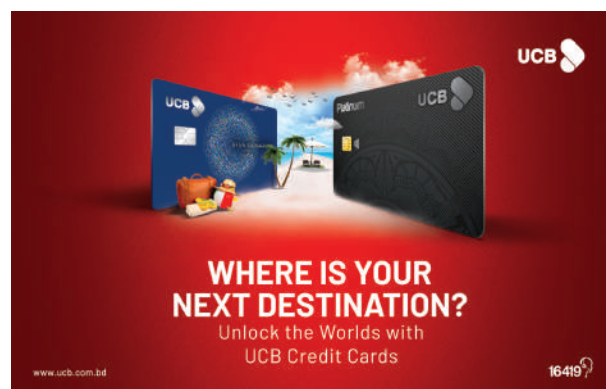
Farmers who cultivated early varieties of potatoes are once again incurring losses as prices of newly harvested tubers remain unusually low due to an oversupply of older stock in the market.

Fresh potatoes are traditionally sold at a premium for their aroma and taste, particularly when supplies of new harvests are limited. This year, however, the price gap between new and old potatoes has narrowed significantly, undermining farmers' expectations.

Growers say they had a bumper harvest last winter and had to accept a low rate, which has sent many to almost bankruptcy. Now, rising production costs have made the prevailing prices of early varieties unsustainable.

According to potato farmers, production cost stands at around Tk 30 per kilogramme (kg) this season, while wholesale prices hover between Tk 28 and Tk 30.

In Dhaka's retail markets, new potatoes are selling for around Tk 35 per kg, with traders purchasing them from farmers at below Tk 30. Smaller-sized new potatoes are fetching even lower prices, between Tk 25 and Tk 30 per kg, close to the Tk 20-Tk 25 per kg price of old potatoes.



"The market is still flooded with old potatoes, which is keeping prices of new ones down," said Arif Hossain, a retail trader in Mirpur. He said he bought fresh potatoes at Tk 28 per kg and is selling them at Tk 35.

According to data from the state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, both new and old potatoes were selling at Tk 60-Tk 70 per kg in mid-December last year.

Early potato varieties are planted in early October and harvested within 60-65 days, reaching markets from early December. This season, however, farmers say adverse weather and high input costs have compounded their

difficulties.

Nabin Chandra Sarkar, a farmer from Rangpur Sadar upazila, said continuous rainfall during planting made it difficult to protect crops. "Despite all the effort, the price is far below expectations. Even early potatoes are now being sold at a loss."

Dilbar Rahman, a farmer from the Teesta riverine area of Lalmonirhat, said he spent Tk 6.20 lakh cultivating early potatoes on 10 bighas of land but earned only Tk 5.70 lakh from sales. "Last year, I made a profit of around Tk 200,000 on the same land."

Farmers from Kurigram district reported similar losses.

Mostofa Azad Chowdhury Babu, president of the Bangladesh Cold Storage Association, said around 500,000 tonnes of potatoes remain in cold storage, although facilities are usually cleared by December 10. "The faster the stock is cleared, the lower the losses."

Bangladesh produced about 1.15 crore tonnes of potatoes last winter, far exceeding domestic demand.

The association estimates annual demand at 80-90 lakh tonnes, including household consumption, industrial use and seed.

With supply outpacing demand, farmers were forced to sell potatoes below production costs.





THE ONLY STEEL FACTORY IN BANGLADESH TO RECEIVE THE

GREEN FACTORY AWARD 2025



BANGLADESH'S

NO.1 CEMENT BRAND

Govt urges Meta to act against violence-inciting content

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has urged Meta to take urgent action to prevent the misuse of its platforms to incite violence and destabilise society amid ongoing political unrest in Bangladesh.

In a letter sent on Friday to senior Meta officials, including those responsible for Facebook, the regulator said the country is passing through a critical period marked by violence following a mass uprising.

"We write to you during a critical period in Bangladesh, where ongoing political unrest has led to widespread violence and instability," the letter said.

It said that following the uprising -- in which over 1,400 students reportedly died and thousands were injured -- Bangladesh is undergoing a fragile political transition, with an interim government

SEE PAGE 3



Fishermen unload fresh hilsa at Fishery Ghat on the Karnaphuli in Chattogram city yesterday. Sold through auction at the ghat, the fish will then reach consumers via retailers. Depending on size and quality, hilsa is currently trading at Tk 15,000 to Tk 30,000 per maund in the wholesale market.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

7 held over mob killing of RMG worker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion has arrested seven people in connection with the killing of Dipu Chandra Das by a mob in Bhaluka upazila of Mymensingh, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing said yesterday.

The arrestees are Md Limon Sarkar, 19; Md Tarek Hossain, 19; Md Manik Mia, 20; Ershad Ali, 39; Nijum Uddin, 20; Alamgir Hossain, 38; and Md Miraj Hossain Akon, 46.

Rab-14 arrested the suspects during raids carried out at different locations, the statement said.

Dipu, 27, a garment worker, was beaten to death by the mob on Thursday night over allegations of "hurting religious sentiments".

Citing a factory official, Mymensingh district police's Additional Superintendent, Abdullah Al Mamun said a group of workers started beating Dipu inside the factory over allegations of "derogatory remarks about Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH)" around 8:00pm.

Factory sources said the attackers dragged Dipu out of the factory, after which local residents also joined the assault, killing him on the spot. They later set his body on fire, leaving it partially burnt.

BNP blames the govt inaction for spate of attacks

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP has blamed the interim government for a spate of attacks, vandalism and arson across the country, alleging that a section within the administration is seeking to destabilise Bangladesh ahead of the upcoming election.

Party leaders pointed to a series of violent incidents, including attacks on the offices of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, the Indian Assistant High Commission and its staff residences, the Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre, and damage to the Udichi office.

They said these incidents have raised serious questions about the effectiveness and impartiality of law enforcement agencies.

"The government cannot ignore these incidents, which are clearly part of a wider attempt to destabilise the country," a senior leader said during a Standing Committee meeting held on Friday night. Acting chairman Tarique Rahman presided over the meeting virtually from London at the party chairperson's Gulshan office.

BNP leaders warned that such violence could plunge the country into chaos and ultimately benefit the Awami League. They also said the killing of Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, a July uprising frontliner, is being used to sabotage the election environment. Hadi,

convener of Inqilab Moncho, was an aspiring independent candidate for the Dhaka-8 seat.

According to the BNP, a group is deliberately creating "chaos" to prevent the national election from being held in February. "There are forces working to disturb the election, and it is vital that the government responds with the necessary strength to ensure a peaceful election process," another senior leader said.

The Standing Committee discussed how the deteriorating law and order situation could derail the country's democratic transition, expressing concern that the government's failure to act decisively is fuelling unrest.

"It seems that some sections are deliberately trying to worsen the situation in the lead-up to Tarique Rahman's return to Bangladesh," said one Standing Committee member, adding that BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia remains in stable condition in the intensive care unit of Evercare Hospital in Dhaka, where she has been receiving treatment for the last 27 days, the BNP media cell said last night.

Dr AZM Zahid Hossain, personal physician of the former prime minister, said a small medical procedure was successfully carried out on Khaleda on Friday.

She is now receiving treatment in a Critical Care Unit cabin with ICU facilities, under the supervision of a medical

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Khaleda stable, remains in ICU

Says BNP media cell

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia remains in stable condition in the intensive care unit of Evercare Hospital in Dhaka, where she has been receiving treatment for the last 27 days, the BNP media cell said last night.

Dr AZM Zahid Hossain, personal physician of the former prime minister, said a small medical procedure was successfully carried out on Khaleda on Friday.

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Abolish NTMC, take surveillance power away from home ministry

Say 94 citizens in a joint statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of 94 citizens yesterday called for the complete abolition of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC) and urged the interim government to approve the draft Telecommunication (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 without placing surveillance powers to home ministry.

In a joint statement, the signatories said Bangladesh is currently undergoing a process of justice, reform and elections, which includes reforms of laws and policies.

However, despite stakeholder participation in drafting new ordinances and amending existing laws, public opinions are being consistently ignored.

In line with the aspirations of the July uprising, the interim government had published the draft Bangladesh Telecommunication (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025, proposing the permanent removal of the government's power to shut down the internet and major reforms to the existing surveillance framework.

The proposals reflected public demands for safeguards against abuse of power, the statement said.

The citizens referred to longstanding allegations of human rights violations, unlawful and unchecked surveillance and enforced disappearances linked to the NTMC.

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Dredgers lift sand from the Bangshi river in Savar's Nayerhat area. According to locals, a group of influential people has been operating an illegal sand business for years by occupying a section of the river, harming the ecosystem and narrowing the waterway. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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