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## Dhaka, Thimphu seek to scale up cooperation

Sign 3 MoUs; Bhutanese king calls on PM on first day of his 4-day tour

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Bhutan eye greater regional cooperation by connecting the landlocked Himalayan nation to the Bay of Bengal as Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck began his four-day visit of Bangladesh yesterday.

The officials of the two countries laid special emphasis on regional and sub-regional cooperation on trade and investment, energy and transport, according to a joint statement issued after a meeting between Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office in Dhaka.

The two nations signed three memorandums of understanding (MoUs) on establishing Bhutanese Special Economic Zone in Kurigram, setting up a burn and plastic surgery unit in Thimphu by Bangladesh, and technical cooperation on consumer rights.

Besides, an agreement on cultural cooperation was renewed.

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**A CELEBRATION OF COLOURS ...** Young women, smearing abir (powdered dyes) on each other, were all smiles and laughter while celebrating Holi, otherwise known as Dol Purnima, in Dhakeshwari National Temple in Old Dhaka yesterday. The festival signifies the victory of good over evil and is also celebrated as a thanksgiving for a good harvest.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## UPAZILA POLLS All aspirants must submit nominations online: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has made mandatory the submission of nominations online for the aspirants of upcoming upazila elections to prevent the violation of the electoral code of conduct.

Ashok Kumar Debnath, additional secretary to the EC, told The Daily Star yesterday that this way, candidates will not come under pressure from anybody to submit or withdraw their nomination papers.

In a statement, the commission asked all candidates – chairman, vice-chairman, and female vice-chairman – to submit their nomination papers online before the deadline.

EC officials said it has been seen that many aspirants go to offices of returning officers in processions to collect or submit nomination forms, violating polls rules.

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## CONCERT CARNAGE Russia casts doubt on IS attack claim 4 gunmen appear in court

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia yesterday cast doubt on assertions by the United States that the Islamic State militant group was responsible for a gun attack on a concert hall outside Moscow which killed 137 people and injured 182 more.

In the deadliest attack inside Russia for two decades, four men burst into the Crocus City Hall on Friday night, spraying people with bullets just before Soviet-era rock group Picnic was to perform its hit "Afraid of Nothing".

Four men, at least one a Tajik, were remanded in custody for terrorism. They appeared separately, led into a cage at Moscow's Basmanny district court by Federal Security Service officers.

**Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said US was evoking the "bogeyman" of IS to cover its "wards" in Kyiv.**

Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the attack, a claim which the United States has publicly said it believed, and the militant group has since released what it says is footage from the attack. US officials said they warned Russia of intelligence about an imminent attack earlier this month.

France yesterday joined the United States in saying intelligence indicated Islamic State was responsible for the attack.

"The information available to us ... as well as to our main partners, indicates indeed that it was an entity of the Islamic State which instigated this attack," French President Emmanuel Macron told reporters, referring to Islamic State's affiliate in Afghanistan, which is known as ISIS-Khorasan or ISIS-K.

"This group also tried to commit several actions on our own soil," he said during a visit to French Guiana.

But President Vladimir Putin has not publicly mentioned the Islamist militant group in connection with the attackers, who he said had been trying to escape to Ukraine.

## SALARY, EID BONUS 416 factories likely to miss payments

Says Industrial Police based on its findings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 416 factories may face difficulties in paying their workers' salaries and bonuses in time for Eid, as per the Industrial Police's estimates.

"The delay in payment of wages and festival allowance may create unrest, so we alerted and warned the factory owners to pay their workers on time to prevent any untoward incident," Sana Saminur Rahman, the additional deputy inspector general (crime and operations) of Industrial Police, told The Daily Star.

Among the factories, 171 are members of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), 71 are members of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) and 29 are members of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), as per the Industrial Police's database.

The Industrial Police informed the representatives of the BGMEA, the BKMEA and the BTMA yesterday.

"We have identified the factories by reviewing intelligence information," said Mahabubor Rahman, chief of the Industrial Police chief.

The factories are at risk due to various reasons including financial crisis and lack of purchase order.

The owners have been requested not to lay off workers under any

circumstances without any reasonable reason before Eid, said Rahman, also an additional inspector general of police.

"We have held meetings with different agencies so that there is no deterioration of law and order at factories on the occasion of Eid. We also discussed who should do what if there is a problem in any factory."

The factory owners have been requested to find a way to pay the Eid bonus at the beginning of April and the salary for March before the Eid holidays and to give Eid holidays to workers in phases, Rahman added.

"There are too many crises," said Mohammad Hatem, executive president of BKMEA, who was present at the meeting.

He went on to complain about the lower work orders, high interest rates and inflation.

"The gas prices have gone up and yet gas is not available properly. Due to this, the production is being disrupted. Production disruption means that you do not get paid on time and there will be problems in paying salaries and bonuses."

The Bangladesh Bank owes around Tk 5,500 crore in incentives.

If the sum is disbursed before Eid, it will be easy to pay salaries and bonuses to the workers, Hatem added.

BGMEA Vice President-elect Abdullah Hil Rakib said they have

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## Fatah official seeks Dhaka's support for Palestine

UNB, Dhaka

Fatah Central Committee Secretary General Lt Gen Jibril Rajoub has sought Bangladesh's continued support through sustained communication with the international community to increase pressure on the Israeli government to stop the war and its renewed attempts at ethnic cleansing aimed at reducing the chances of achieving sustainable peace based on a two-state solution.

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## Thai scientists breed coral in labs to restore degraded reefs

REUTERS, Man Nai Island



On a starry night, four Thai marine biologists scuba dived through shallow waters off an island in the country's south as billions of pink specks floated up from the ocean floor in a spectacle that takes place only once a year.

The pink specks were sperm and eggs released by coral. The scientists collected as many samples as possible for breeding, as they fight to save Thailand's expansive reefs from degradation driven by warming oceans and human activity like tourism.

Their research is painstaking because the coral only spawn once a year, and it can take up to five years to raise the juveniles in a lab before they are ready to be transferred back onto the seabed.



**PRAYER TIMING**  
MARCH 26



Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
4:41	12:45	4:45	6:15	7:45
JAMAAT 4:51 1:15 5:00 6:25 8:15				
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION				
SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING				
RAMADAN	MARCH	SEHRI	IFTAR	
15	26			6:15
16	27	4:35		6:16
17	28	4:34		6:16



**ইউসেপ বাংলাদেশ**

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ফোন: ০১৯৭৭২০০১০৮

# ২৬ মার্চ


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