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## NON-PAYMENT OF TAX NBR freezes bank accounts of 12 pvt univs

ARAFAT RAHAMAN and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The bank accounts of at least 12 private universities have been frozen for not following the National Board of Revenue's instruction to pay 15 percent income tax.

Until yesterday, the NBR also sent notices to more than 30 private universities, including these 12, directing them to clear their tax payments, said sources at the Association for Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB).

The letters were sent out after the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court scrapped the High Court verdict that declared illegal the government orders imposing 15 percent tax on private universities, and private medical, dental and engineering colleges.

**"This [bank account freezing] could result in delay in payment of salaries and festival allowances for staffers, and impact essential services for students ahead of Eid."**

**SHEIKH KABIR HOSSAIN**  
Chairman of Association for Private Universities of Bangladesh

Sheikh Kabir Hossain, chairman of the APUB, a guild of private university owners, yesterday said the authorities have frozen the bank accounts just ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

"This could result in delay in payment of salaries and festival allowances for staffers, and impact essential services for students ahead of Eid," he told this newspaper. "I think this move is to embarrass the government."

According to the APUB, the 12 universities that received letters from their banks about the freezing of accounts are: North South University; American International University Bangladesh; University of Asia Pacific; East West University; Southeast University; Daffodil International University; Independent University; University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh; Notre Dame University Bangladesh;

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Traffic police in the capital's Shantinagar using a rope to stop vehicles, especially rickshaws, from getting on the zebra crossing while waiting for the signal to turn green. More often than not, cars and rickshaws that stop for the red light stand right on the crossing, leaving no space for people to cross the road safely. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Israeli troops leave Al Shifa Hospital 'destroyed'

20 bodies recovered, some crushed by withdrawing vehicles

AGENCIES

Israeli forces have withdrawn from Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City after a two-week operation, the Israeli military said yesterday, leaving behind a wasteland of destroyed buildings and Palestinian bodies scattered in the dirt of the complex.

Hundreds of residents rushed to the area around the Gaza Strip's

largest hospital to check on damage to the surrounding residential districts after fighting between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas group that administers Gaza.

The Israeli military said it had killed and detained hundreds of gunmen in clashes in the area of the hospital, and seized weaponry and intelligence documents. Hamas and medical staff deny that

Palestinian fighters have any armed presence in hospitals.

A spokesman from Gaza's Civil Emergency Service said Israeli forces had executed two people whose bodies were found at the complex in handcuffs, and used bulldozers to dig up the grounds of the complex and exhume buried bodies.

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## TOSHAKHANA CASE Imran Khan's jail sentence suspended

REUTERS, Islamabad

A Pakistani court yesterday granted former prime minister Imran Khan an appeal of his conviction for graft and suspended his 14-year jail sentence, his lawyer said, a relief for his embattled party which had won most seats in February's national polls.

Just a week ahead of the February 8 elections, Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi were both handed a 14-year sentence on charges of unlawfully selling state gifts by an anti-graft court.

Despite the suspension, Khan will remain in jail on multiple other sentences which were imposed on the ex-cricketer star ahead of the polls, which also disqualified him from holding any public office for 10 years.

Islamabad High Court said that the couple's graft sentence will remain suspended until a final decision on the conviction which will be taken up for arguments and evidence as a main petition after Eid holidays, said the lawyer, Barrister Ali Zafar.

"No evidence backs up this conviction," he told reporters outside the court in Islamabad, saying that was why the court suspended the sentence on first hearing of the appeal.

Khan and his wife were charged with illegally selling gifts, worth more than 140 million rupees (\$500,000) and received during his 2018-2022 premiership, from a state treasury known locally known as the "Toshakhana".

A list of these gifts shared by a former information minister included perfumes, diamond jewellery, dinner sets and seven watches, six of them Rolexes - the most expensive being a "Master Graff limited edition" valued at 85 million rupees (\$304,000).

Khan was also handed a three-year prison sentence in August for the same charge by another court, but that sentence had been suspended on appeal.

Khan and his party say the legal cases against him were based on made-up charges to keep him out of politics at the behest of the country's powerful army after he had fallen out with the military's generals. The army denies the accusation.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Homes have been flattened in Pagla of Sunamganj's Shantiganj upazila after a nor'wester accompanied by hail ripped through the area around 10:00pm on Sunday. Many affected are now living under the open sky.

## ACC sues Ron, Rick Sikder for money laundering



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday sued seven individuals, including Ron Haque Sikder, the managing director (MD) of Sikder Group, and his brother Rick Haque Sikder, a former director of National Bank Limited (NBL), for money laundering abroad.

The other five accused are NBL's former executive vice president Mahfuzur Rahman, former MDs Shah Syed Abdul Bari and Choudhury Moshtaq Ahmed, and former

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## A paltry 3 paisa cut in bus fare

Jatri Kalyan Samity terms it mockery with passengers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has reduced bus fare by only 3 paisa per kilometre, a decision many found ridiculous and unimplementable.

Issuing a circular yesterday, the Road Transport and Highways Division said the decision will come into force from today.

The fare for 156km bus trip from Dhaka (Saydabad terminal) to Barishal should reduce by only Tk 4.68, which is now Tk 524 including tolls, and the fare for the 242km trip from Dhaka to Chattogram should reduce by Tk 7.26, now Tk 675 including tolls.

The distance between Pallabi and Bahadur Shah, one of the longest busroutes inside the capital, is 16.9km. But the route users would not benefit as the slashed fare would be less than Tk 1. Travellers now pay Tk 41.

Passenger welfare platform, Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, termed the decision of cutting down the bus fare "mockery with the people".

A day after the government slashed fuel price by Tk 2.25 per litre, a committee, led Bangladesh Road Transport Authority Chairman Nur

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114 women raped in first 3 months this year: ASK report P3



**PRAYER TIMING**  
APRIL 2

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-33	12-45	4-45	6-19	7-45
JAMAAT 4-43	1-15	5-00	6-29	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING**

RAMADAN	APRIL	SEHRI	IFTAR
22	2		6:19
23	3	4:27	6:19
24	4	4:26	6:19



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