

**BSRM**  
building a safer nation

WITH BSRM FAST BUILD  
**YOUR HOME WILL BE BUILT ON TIME  
WITH THE BEST QUALITY RODS**

Terminal 3,  
Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport

Proud  
Construction  
Partner

## Judicial freedom curtailed by political meddling, graft

Says US state dept report on Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Though Bangladesh's constitution provided for an independent judiciary, corruption and political interference compromised its independence, said the US State Department in a report.

"The government generally did not respect judicial independence and impartiality. Human rights observers maintained that lower courts often ruled based on influence from or loyalty to political patronage networks, particularly in cases filed against opposition political party supporters," said the report titled "2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Bangladesh".

"Observers claimed judges who made decisions unfavorable to the government risked transfer to other jurisdictions."

The report was prepared by the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour on 198 countries and territories. It was launched by Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Washington DC early yesterday.

In December 2021, the Biden Administration had imposed sanctions on Rab and several of its senior officials for alleged human rights violations. In May last year, it announced a visa restriction policy for those undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh.

Overall, the report said, there were no significant changes in the human rights situation in Bangladesh last year.

It added that political affiliation was often a factor in claims of arrest and prosecution of members of opposition parties, including through spurious charges under the pretext of responding to national

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Cuet students angry over the death of two fellow students in a road crash on Monday blocked the Pahartali road in front of the university campus in Chattogram's Raozan upazila yesterday. Inset, they set fire to tyres during their demonstration for safe roads and justice.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## ROAD CRASH Road blocked over death of two Cuet students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Cuet students blocked Chattogram-Kaptai road in front of the university yesterday, protesting the death of two students in a road crash on Monday.

The students, who started demonstrating around 10:00am, were on the road until 5:00pm, disrupting traffic.

On Monday afternoon, two students of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology - Shanto Saha and Taufiq Hossain - were killed and another injured as a bus and a motorbike collided.

Angry students torched a bus on the road following the incident.

Contacted, Asadul Islam, a fourth-year student of Materials and Metallurgical Engineering at Cuet, said the demonstrating

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## RANA PLAZA DISASTER Over a decade on, all 14 cases stuck in endless loop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

None of the 14 ongoing cases filed over the Rana Plaza tragedy has seen much progress 11 years into the incident, BLAST revealed at a press briefing at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Meanwhile, one case, filed by the wife of a deceased victim, was dismissed as she could no longer appear in court for hearings.

Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust held the press briefing to commemorate the worst industrial disaster in Bangladesh's history.

A case filed by Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha in 2013 had 135 witnesses listed, but none of them has given their statement yet.

Rajuk had sued Sohel Rana, the owner of Rana Plaza, former Savar municipal mayor Md Refatullah, former municipality councillor Mohammad Ali and others, blaming them for the collapse of the building.

In 2015, charges were pressed against Sohel and the others.

Other legal cases related to the tragedy are in similar state of lethargy, said the speakers.

The Department of Inspections of Factories and Establishments (DIFE) filed 11 cases charging the owners of the garments factories, among others, following the disaster and arrest warrants were issued on October 13, 2013.

"There have been 45 court dates of these cases since then, and yet those arrest warrants are pending," said Sifat-e-Nur Khanam, senior staff lawyer at BLAST.

It should be checked whether DIFE has even appointed a lawyer for these cases, legal experts said at the briefing.

Meanwhile, police had filed a criminal case accusing Sohel Rana and 40 others of murder. In addition, a deceased victim's wife had filed another murder case.

Of 596 witnesses in the two murder cases, only 84 have given their statements so far.

According to MA Awa, the acting chairman of the Labour Appeal Tribunal and senior magistrate, "It's not necessary to take the

TRIAL OF MURDER CASE DRAGS ON - PAGE 3

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## Indian court extends pre-trial detention of Kejriwal

REUTERS

A Delhi court yesterday extended the pre-trial detention of Indian opposition leader Arvind Kejriwal until May 7 in a corruption case, the legal news website Live Law reported.

Kejriwal, the chief minister of the national capital territory of Delhi, was arrested last month in connection with graft allegations relating to the city's liquor policy, weeks before general elections.

The Enforcement Directorate, India's federal financial crime fighting agency, is investigating allegations that a liquor policy implemented by the Delhi government in 2022 gave undue advantages to



SEE PAGE 7 COL 3

## EU votes today to hold brands liable for manufacturers' rights violations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union is set to vote on a bill today that has the provision for holding brands responsible for violations of human rights or environmental laws by manufacturers.

"Exactly 11 years after the [Rana Plaza] collapse, the European Parliament will vote on the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive," said the Clean Clothes Campaign in a press release recently.

"For the first time over the last decade, this day of commemoration will also be a day of hope. On the day where we remember the lives lost in the Rana Plaza collapse, this vote represents a significant milestone for workers, communities, and activists worldwide and a major step for corporate accountability," the press release quoted Muriel Treibich, Lobby and Advocacy Coordinator for the Clean Clothes Campaign as saying.

The bill, if passed, will be applicable for companies having over 500 employees on average and a net worldwide turnover exceeding 150 million euros.

The draft law states that such companies are liable for their "upstream" and "downstream" partners.

"In order for the due diligence to have a meaningful impact, it should cover human rights and environmental adverse impacts generated through the majority of the life cycle of production, distribution, transport, storage and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## ISRAELI STRIKES

### 'We feel the need to raise the alarm'

UN rights chief 'horrified' by mass grave reports at Gaza hospitals; 32 more Palestinians killed

REUTERS, Geneva

UN rights chief Volker Turk said yesterday that he was "horrified" by the destruction of the Nasser and Al Shifa hospitals in Gaza and reports of mass graves containing hundreds of bodies there, according to a spokesperson.

283 bodies were found at Nasser, 30 at Shifa hospitals

Israel strikes northern Gaza in heaviest shelling in weeks

Death toll in the enclave rises to 34,183

Palestinian authorities reported finding bodies in mass graves at a hospital in Khan Younis this week after it was abandoned by Israeli troops. Bodies were also reported at the Al Shifa site following an Israeli special forces operation.

"We feel the need to raise the alarm because clearly there have been multiple bodies discovered," said Ravina Shamdasani, the spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

"Some of them had their hands tied, which of course indicates serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and these need to be subjected to further investigations."

She added that the UN human rights office was working on corroborating Palestinian officials' reports that 283 bodies were found at Nasser and 30 at Al Shifa.

According to those reports, the bodies were buried beneath piles of waste and included women and older people.

Turk, addressing a UN briefing via Shamdasani, also decried Israeli strikes on Gaza in recent days, which he said had killed mostly women and children. He also repeated a warning against a full-scale incursion on Rafah, saying this could lead to "further atrocity crimes".

Israel's military yesterday rejected Palestinian allegations of mass burials and possible executions at a Gaza hospital, and said it had exhumed corpses to try to find hostages taken by Hamas in October.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said at least 34,183 people have been killed in the territory as the Israel's offensive in Gaza marked its 200th day yesterday. The tally includes at least 32 deaths in the past 24 hours, a ministry statement said.



Palestinians rush to get the humanitarian aid packages dropped over the northern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## KALPANA CHAKMA ABDUCTION

### After 28 years, court accepts final report

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A Rangamati court yesterday accepted the final report in the much-talked-about Kalpana Chakma abduction case, after around 28 years of the incident.

The court also rejected a Naraji (no-confidence) petition filed by the victim's family challenging the police report, submitted in September 2016. The police failed to identify any abductors.

Rangamati Senior Judicial Magistrate Fatema Begum Mukta passed the order after hearing the petition, said the plaintiff's lawyer Juel Dewan.

"We will move to the higher court with this case," he told The Daily Star.

Kalpana's elder brother Kalindi Kumar Chakma said, "We are not satisfied with this court order. We will file our petition with the higher court."

Kalpana, who was the organising secretary of Hill Women's Federation, was abducted from her home in remote Niulaghona village in Rangamati's Baghaichhari upazila in the early hours of June 12, 1996, a year before the signing of the CHT Peace Accord.

Kalindi filed an abduction case with Baghaichhari Police Station against some security officers working in Rangamati, according to the case documents.

The incident drew huge criticism at home and abroad

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5