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## UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNIONS Student bodies split over polls timing

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

With Dhaka and Jahangirnagar universities gearing up for student union elections, the student bodies are now sharply divided over when the polls should be held.

The Students Against Discrimination and Shibir are in favour of elections without much delay as they are confident of winning.

The Chhatra Dal, on the other hand, is keen on delaying the elections until the national polls because its leaders are yet to be "fully active" on campuses, said insiders.

Most of the left-wing student parties are also in favour of delaying the election. They want to reform the structure of students' union, popularly known as chhatra sangsad, at DU and JU.

During the July mass uprising, most student bodies took part in the protests, the face of which was Students Against Discrimination. After the fall of Awami League government in early August, rifts began to appear among the student bodies over various issues.

Many leaders of the Chhatra Dal, the pro-BNP student body, have already graduated from DU and JU. Since they are not students and remained inactive on campuses for many years, they fear losing, activists said.

Abu Baker Majumder, a key SAD leader who is likely to run for a top post, said, "Different kinds of organisations now coexist on campus. Now is the time to prioritise student rights. Ducusu is the main forum to champion their rights on campus."

SM Farhad, president of DU unit Shibir, said, "There is a level playing field for everyone. We demand reforms to the Ducusu constitution and elections by February. We believe the reforms can be made soon."

On the other hand, Chhatra Dal leaders believe students' union polls should be held after the national elections.

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Tarique Rahman welcomes his mother BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia after her arrival at the Heathrow International Airport in London yesterday.

PHOTO COURTESY: BNP

## Khaleda and Tarique reunite after 7yrs

The ex-PM was driven to the London Clinic by her son directly from Heathrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It had been precisely 2,732 days since BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last met her only surviving son.

Until yesterday.

As she emerged out of the Heathrow International Airport in London on a wheelchair, it was first her daughter-in-law Zubaida Rahman who embraced her.

Her son Tarique Rahman then slowly walked

towards her. He leaned forward and gave his ailing mother a gentle hug.

The emotions, both joy and relief, that filled the air were palpable.

Clad in a golden saree, covered in a grey shawl, Khaleda tenderly placed her hand on her son's back, as they both smiled warmly, leaving onlookers moved by the silent, yet heartfelt exchange.

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As vegetables are unloaded at the capital's Sadek Khan Krishi Market, the trucks carrying them occupy a portion of the Gabtoli-Sadarghat-Beribandh Road, disrupting vehicular movement and creating tailbacks in the area. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Interest rate on savings certificates to be raised

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The interim government is set to increase the interest rates against various savings certificates to upwards of 12 percent as it looks to provide some relief to the fixed income group squeezed by the elevated inflation.

At present, the interest rates provided against the four savings certificates under the Department of National Savings ranged from 11.04 percent to 11.76 percent.

The savings instruments are: the five-year Bangladesh savings certificate, the three monthly profit-bearing Sanchayapatra, the five-year family savings certificate and the five-year pensioners' savings certificate.

The government will introduce the new system for the savings

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## TK 9,000CR UNPAID BILLS Power producers warn of supply disruption

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The Bangladesh Independent Power Producers Association (BIPPA) has urged the government to clear half of its overdue payments, amounting to Tk 9,000 crore, within the next 10 days or contend with disruptions to the electricity supply during Ramadan.

In a letter signed by BIPPA President David Hasanat, the association said the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) is obligated under power purchase agreements (PPA) to clear payments within 45 days.

However, payments have been delayed for more than five months and the backlog has persisted for more than three years.

"The situation is critical," the letter said, adding that the nation's energy supply chain faces imminent collapse if payments are not received within the timeframe.

This will, in turn, have a severe and widespread impact, jeopardising agricultural production, national food security, industrial output and essential services to households during the crucial periods of the irrigation season, Ramadan and summer, it said.

The unpaid dues prevent power producers from importing furnace oil needed for electricity generation, according to Hasanat.

"If we don't get at least half of our payments, we will not be able to open letters of credit to import furnace oil in due time to generate adequate power during Ramadan," he said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Govt preparing for both nat'l, local elections  
Says chief adviser

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The interim government is simultaneously preparing for national and local body elections, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus told European Investment Bank [EIB] Vice-President Nicola Beer yesterday.

He said this when Beer called on him at state guest house Jamuna, according to the press wing of the Chief Adviser's Office.



Earlier, Prof Yunus said the national elections would be held either at the end of this year or by the first half of next year.

He sought EIB's help in tackling corruption, the green transition in energy,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

## Proof of graft, power abuse found against Hasina: DG of ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has found clear evidence that former prime minister Sheikh Hasina abused power to amass wealth, said its Director General Akhtar Hossain.

"Officers are collecting documents from various offices... So far, we have gathered substantial information. We hope to share good news with you soon," he said.

The ACC has launched four investigations into the allegations of abuse of power and corruption against Hasina and her family members.

On December 17, the commission began two

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## ভোটার তালিকা হালনাগাদ কর্মসূচি ২০২৫

আগামী ২০ জানুয়ারি ২০২৫ তারিখ হতে সারাদেশে ভোটার তালিকা হালনাগাদ কার্যক্রম শুরু হচ্ছে। যাদের জন্য ০১ জানুয়ারি ২০০৮ বা তার পূর্বে এবং বিগত হালনাগাদে যারা বাদ পড়েছেন তাদের তথ্য নির্বাচন কমিশন কর্তৃক নিয়োগপ্রাপ্ত তথ্যসংগ্রহকারীগণ বাড়ি বাড়ি গিয়ে সংগ্রহ করবেন। এসময় ভোটার তালিকা হতে বাদ দেয়ার জন্য মৃত ভোটারদের তথ্যও সংগ্রহ করা হবে। তথ্য সংগ্রহের এ কার্যক্রম ০৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৫ তারিখ পর্যন্ত চলবে।

## ভোটার হতে যেমন কাগজপত্র লাগবে:

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## ভোটার হওয়ার সময় যেমন বিষয়ে মত্ত্ব থাকতে হবে:

- ❖ নিজের নাম, পিতা-মাতার নাম, জন্ম নিবন্ধন বা শিক্ষা সনদের সাথে ছবি মিলিয়ে লিখতে হবে
- ❖ জন্ম তারিখ অবশ্যই জন্ম নিবন্ধন বা শিক্ষা সনদ অনুযায়ী হতে হবে
- ❖ ছায়ী ঠিকানা লেখার ক্ষেত্রে অবশ্যই ভোটারের প্রকৃত ছায়ী ঠিকানা লিখতে হবে
- ❖ কোন অবস্থাতেই দ্বৈত বা দুইবার ভোটার হওয়া যাবে না

মনে রাখবেন; একাধিকবার ভোটার হওয়া আইনত দণ্ডনীয় অপরাধ  
কেউ একাধিকবার ভোটার হলে  
আঁশের ছাপ পরীক্ষার মাধ্যমে তা সহজেই শনাক্ত করা যায়

## সঠিক তথ্য ভোটার হওয়া, নির্বাচনে ভোট দেবো

বাংলাদেশ নির্বাচন কমিশন

PASSPORT INDEX 2025

## Bangladesh in bottom 7

Shares 100th spot with Libya, Palestine

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has slipped three notches in the global passport ranking for 2025, now standing at 100th place, according to the latest index released by UK-based firm Henley & Partners yesterday.

With this ranking, Bangladeshis now hold the 7th weakest passport globally.

Based on data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and backed up by in-house research, the index ranks all 199 of the world's most powerful passports based on how many of 227 global travel destinations they grant visa-free access to.

Bangladeshi passport holders currently have visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 40 countries, down from 42 destinations in the previous year. This places Bangladesh in the same rank as Libya and the Palestinian Territories, a slight decline from last year's 97th position when it shared the spot with North Korea.

In South Asia, the Maldives, placed at 53rd position, holds the highest ranking. It is followed by India, Bhutan and Sri Lanka, placed respectively at 85th, 90th and 96th positions. Nepal and Pakistan rank just below Bangladesh at 101st and 103rd positions.

At the top of the index, Singapore ranks first, granting its passport holders visa-free access to 195 destinations. Japan follows in second place, allowing its citizens to



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## Interest rate on savings certificates to be raised

FROM PAGE 1

certificates which will be linked to the government's treasury bond interest rates.

The new system will be effective from January 1, said a finance ministry official, adding that the official notification would come soon.

The chief adviser has approved the new system and the relevant documents have been sent to the Internal Resources Division of the finance ministry for issuing the notification.

According to the proposal, the interest rates against savings certificates will be fixed following the weighted average interest rates of the five-year and two-year treasury bonds.

The interest rates against the treasury bonds will be reviewed every six months and the savings certificates' interest rates will be reviewed.

Besides, in case of re-fixing the interest rates against savings certificates, a premium of at most 50 basis points will be added to the weighted average treasury bond interest rates.

There are three types of interest ceilings for the four savings certificates at present.

As per the new system, the interest rate against the five-year Bangladesh savings certificate will be 12.4 percent for up to Tk 7.5 lakh. For savings of Tk 7.5 lakh and above, the interest rate will be 12.37 percent.

At present, a beneficiary gets 11.28 percent interest for up to Tk 15 lakh after the maturity period, 10.30 percent for between Tk 15 lakh and Tk 30 lakh, and 9.3 percent for more than Tk 30 lakh.

In the case of the three monthly profit-bearing Sanchayapatra, the new interest rate will be 12.3 percent to 12.25 percent. Under the existing system, the interest rates are 11.04 to 9 percent.

In the case of the family savings certificate, the new interest rates will be from 12.5 to 12.37 percent while the existing interest rates are 11.5 to 9.5 percent.

Also, the interest rates against the pensioners' scheme will be 12.55 to 12.37 percent under the new system. At present, it is 11.76 to 9.75 percent.

Meanwhile, interest rates against the other savings instruments -- the wage earners bond, the US dollar investment bond and the US dollar premium bond -- will remain unchanged.

## Proof of graft

FROM PAGE 1

investigations into allegations that Hasina, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, and sister Sheikh Rehana and her daughter Tulip Siddiqi embezzled Tk 80,000 crore from different projects.

The anti-graft body on December 22 decided to look into allegations that Hasina and Joy laundered \$300 million.

On December 26, ACC launched another investigation into the allegations of abuse of power to obtain plots of land against Hasina and her close family members.

## Khaleda and Tarique reunite after 7yrs

FROM PAGE 1

Mohammad Hazrat Ali Khan, acting high commissioner of Bangladesh to the United Kingdom, and several leaders of UK BNP also greeted the party chief at the airport with flowers.

Accompanied by Zubaida, Tarique, acting chairman of BNP who had been living in London with his family since 2008, then took it upon himself to drive his mother to the London Clinic directly from the airport.

The former prime minister was then admitted there.

This marks Khaleda's first overseas trip since July 16, 2017, when she last traveled to London for medical treatment. She had spent three months with her family and celebrated Eid-ul-Azha that year.

The 79-year-old former prime minister departed from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 11:46pm on Tuesday (January 7), heading to London via Doha on the Qatar Royal Family's Airbus A319 air ambulance arranged by the Emir of Qatar.

She arrived at Heathrow at 2:55pm (Bangladesh time) after a 15-hour journey.

A 15-member team, including Syeda Sharmila Rahman, the wife of Khaleda's late son Arafat Rahman Koko; doctors, air ambulance specialists, party leaders, personal staffers, and caregivers accompanied her on the journey.

The air ambulance took off an hour and 46 minutes late, as Khaleda's convoy moved slowly amidst the huge

crowd of BNP leaders and activists lining the streets.

The BNP chief's eventual departure only became possible after the fall of the AL regime on August 5, 2024, signaling a major shift in the country's political landscape. She was fully freed by an order from President Mohammed Shahabuddin the very next day, paving the way for her overseas treatment.

A three-time former prime minister, Khaleda has been battling multiple health issues, including liver cirrhosis, diabetes, arthritis, and complications involving her kidneys, lungs, heart and eyes.

Doctors from Bangladesh handed over Khaleda's medical documents to UK-based specialists, who have reviewed all necessary tests and records to plan her next steps for treatment, according to party sources.

Speaking to reporters yesterday, her personal physician and BNP standing committee member AZM Zahid Hossain said the Khaleda will be under the supervision of Dr Patrick Kennedy, a consultant of gastroenterology and hepatology at the London Clinic.

Dr Kennedy, a globally recognised expert in liver diseases, is known for his pioneering work in viral liver conditions and holds a special interest in treating complex liver-related ailments.

Zahid earlier said Khaleda's next course of treatment will be determined after the doctors in London assess her health status, adding that she may require a liver transplant because of the cirrhosis and the entire treatment process, including recovery, may take

several months.

Her medical board in Dhaka said she might have to be taken to Johns Hopkins University Hospital for further treatment but only if the London Clinic doctors recommend it.

Also battling several lawsuits, Khaleda was jailed in a corruption case on February 8, 2018.

In April 2019, her health deteriorated due to inadequate medical treatment. She was released from prison after 776 days on March 26, 2020, amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The AL government temporarily released her on an executive order, suspending her sentence on the condition that she remain at her Gulshan residence and not leave the country. The term of her release had been extended several times.

In April 2021, she contracted Covid-19 and recovered while under treatment at home. However, as the other health complications surfaced, she was admitted to Evercare Hospital several times.

On October 26, 2023, a team of three specialist doctors from the United States performed the transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt procedure to address the fluid accumulation in her stomach and chest, as well as a bleed in the liver.

Senior BNP leaders, who, along with other activists, have campaigned for Khaleda's access to proper medical care over the past five years, said her medical trip to London is a pivotal moment for the party.

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The association called on the PDB to comply with contractual provisions to avoid further instability in the sector.

PDB Chairman Md Rezaul Karim acknowledged the financial constraints preventing the immediate clearance of all overdue payments.

"We lack the financial capacity right now to make all the payments."

The PDB has sought assistance from the finance division to clear the dues and is making payments in phases alongside regular monthly settlements.

"We both have issues that need to be resolved collaboratively. There is no room for either side to take a hardline stance," Karim said.

He also noted his recent meeting with EU envoys in December last year when many areas of cooperation were discussed.

Special Envoy to Chief Adviser Lutfey Siddiqi, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority Chairman Ashik Mahmud Chowdhury, Senior Secretary for SDG Affairs Lamia Morshed, Economic Relations Division Secretary Shahriar Kader Siddiqi, and EU Ambassador Michael Miller, were among others, present on the occasion.

## Power producers warn of supply disruption

FROM PAGE 1

The letter comes after BIPPA leaders met Power Secretary Farzana Mamta earlier this week to press home their demand.

"It was the third meeting with the ministry high-ups since November, and we have been notifying [them] continuously to settle the issues before the upcoming Ramadan to keep the power situation normal," Hasanat said.

In the letter, BIPPA also raised concerns about significant financial losses caused by the devaluation of the taka against the dollar.

The IPPs have incurred more than Tk 8,000 crore in losses due to taka devaluation and delayed interest payments, the letter said.

"These losses have eroded financial confidence among lenders," the letter said.

Hasanat provided an example of

how delayed payments exacerbate exchange rate losses.

"When we submitted the bills, the exchange rate was Tk 118. But by the time we received the payments, it had risen to Tk 126," he said.

The letter also addressed the imposition of liquidated damages, a form of monetary penalties or compensation, by the PDB on power plants unable to meet electricity demand. BIPPA described the claims as "arbitrary".

According to Section 13.2(f)(i) of the PPA, the PDB's right to dispatch power is suspended if payments remain overdue for more than 10 business days.

Despite the provision, IPPs have continued supplying electricity, even while facing significant financial difficulties, the letter said.

BIPPA members recently received notices from the PDB regarding

government has undertaken. "We have come in a very challenging time; we back the interim government and its reform agenda."

Pledging support, she said the EU has the technical expertise.

During the visit, Prof Yunus recalled his meeting with EU President Ursula von der Leyen on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in September last year when they had discussed possible areas of support in the fight against corruption and Bangladesh's increased shift towards renewable energy from fossil fuel.

## Govt preparing for both nat'l, local elections

FROM PAGE 1

and formulating a broader plan for the Sundarbans mangrove forest and the surrounding region and river system.

The chief adviser also sought EIB support in building facilities at Chittagong Port for the development of the people in eastern Bangladesh and water management in northern Bangladesh.

He said the development of the port will also benefit eastern India and Myanmar.

Beer assured of EIB help in carrying out vital reforms the

government has undertaken. "We have come in a very challenging time; we back the interim government and its reform agenda."

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Chief Advisor Professor Muhammad Yunus at a meeting with Vice President of European Investment Bank Nicola Beer at the state guest house Jamuna yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

## Freedom fighter held over attack on students' procession

Family says he was framed; case docs show his age as 32

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police have arrested a freedom fighter in Tangail's Sakhipur for his alleged involvement in an attack on a procession of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement on August 3.



Aiyub Khan

However, his family members claimed that the 72-year-old freedom fighter Aiyub Khan had been falsely implicated in a case filed over the attack.

In the case statement, Aiyub Khan has been shown as a 32-year-old.

Aiyub is the former president of Ward-7 of the Jadavpur union unit of Awami League in Sakhipur upazila and is the 135th accused in the case.

Aiyub's family members claimed that he was not even present in Sakhipur on

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## Student bodies split over polls timing

FROM PAGE 1

Its leaders think that the BNP will do very well in the national election and it would give the student body some advantage.

DU Chhatra Dal General Secretary Nahiduzzaman Shipon said the environment on campus was not yet conducive for polls.

He referred to the instances of campus vigilantism and what many have termed as "moral policing".

"We urge the university authorities to prepare for polls once the situation is normal. That would ensure the participation of all student organisations and foster a competitive atmosphere," he said.

The DUCSU grants excessive power to the vice-chancellor, and it should be changed, he said.

### REFORM OF CHARTER

#### FIRST AT JU

SAD leaders demand that the date for election should be set now.

JU authorities formed a five-member election commission.

Shah M Faisal Hossain, joint convener of JU Chhatra Dal, said constitutional and administrative reforms should be made before the JUCSU polls.

"We will soon discuss our reform proposals with the university authorities," he told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, Biplobi Chhatra Maitri, and several cultural organisations, also have similar demands. The Chhatra Dal and these organisations demand that Shibir should not be allowed to participate in the election.

A meeting on JUCSU ended abruptly on November 19 over disagreements on the matter.

Riddha Anindya Ganguly, general secretary of the JU Bangladesh Chhatra Union, said, "We appreciate the administration's willingness to hold the JUCSU election. But necessary reforms must be made first."

Riddha said Shibir was banned at JU in 1989 by 22 student organisations for its involvement in a murder.

"But if Shibir takes accountability and publicly apologises for its past crimes, we may consider acknowledging its political activities,"

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## SABOTAGE CASE

Gayeshwar, Rizvi among 173 BNP men discharged

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday discharged a total of 173 leaders and activists of BNP -- including its standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy and senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi -- from a case filed over sabotage charges in 2018.

Judge Shihabul Islam of Dhaka Special Tribunal 16 passed the order after their lawyers submitted separate petitions for discharging them from the case.

BNP leader Advocate Zainul Abedin, Barrister Kayser Kamal, and Shama Obayed are also among the accused.

According to the case statement, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was returning home after appearing at a special

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North shivers  
IN COLD

STAR REPORT

Sagar Islam, a farmer of Tegra village under Dinajpur's Ulupazila, has been looking to hire farm labourers to prepare lands for Boro cultivation.

However, amid the ongoing cold wave, he has been struggling to find anyone to work in open fields.

"Hardly anyone is willing to work in this severe cold, and many are demanding extra pay," he said. "But I need to prepare the land, as time is running out," he lamented.

The severe cold weather in northern districts, including Dinajpur and Lalmonirhat, has disrupted lives and livelihoods.

In Dinajpur, cold winds from the Himalayas, overcast skies, and slight drizzle since Tuesday night have caused significant hardship. Most residents stayed indoors, seeking warmth under blankets or around fires.

Those who could not afford to stay home, especially low-income people and daily wage earners, suffered greatly while working outside in the biting cold.

Tofazzal Hossain, acting officer at the Dinajpur Regional

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IJTEMA CLASH  
23 accused get anticipatory bail from HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to 23 accused, followers of the Tabligh Jamaat faction aligned with Maulana Saad Kandhalvi, in a case filed over the death of four devotees at the Biswa Ijtema ground in Tongi on December 18 last year.

The HC bench of Justice Muhammad Mahbub Ul Islam and Justice Md Hamidur Rahman granted them anticipatory bail till submission of the police report in the case.

The court passed the order after holding hearing on two bail petitions filed by the accused.

Barrister Abdullah Al Mamun accompanied by lawyers Shahin Hawlader and Khaja Tanvir Ahmed placed arguments on behalf of the petitioners, while Additional Attorney

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



A mother gently cradles her child, wrapped snugly in a shawl, shielding them from the chill of a winter morning. The photo was taken in the capital's Farmgate yesterday while they were returning home from school together.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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## Secure Dhaka airport from bird strikes

Urge flight safety officials at workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Top flight safety officials from various airlines yesterday expressed concerns over bird strike hazards at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) and urged regulators to take action to address the issue.

They said the airport is particularly prone to bird strikes.

At a workshop organised by the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), safety officials from four airlines also highlighted the challenges posed by low visibility during winter due to dense fog, which often forces flight diversions and causes passenger inconvenience.

They suggested upgrading the airport's Instrument Landing System (ILS) from Category I to Category 2 to address the visibility issue.

The workshop was organised by CAAB at its auditorium, following recent aviation disasters, including South Korea's Jeju Air plane crash on December 29, which killed 179 people on board.

According to an Al Jazeera report, the pilot had reported a bird strike moments before the plane crashed.



**Bird strikes are common in Bangladeshi airports. The presence of waste collection centres, landfills, and dense bushes near the airport area attracts birds, particularly black kites, posing significant risks of bird strikes.**

**Anwarul Haq Beg**  
Professor at Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University

Aviation experts said bird strikes during take-offs and landings are particularly dangerous as they can cause jet engines to lose thrust, potentially leading to accidents.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines

officials said bird strikes, though not fatal, frequently damage their aircraft at HSIA and other airfields.

Officials of other airlines said bird strikes have become frequent at Dhaka airport, resulting in significant financial losses.

Presenting his paper, Capt Intekhab Hossain, deputy chief of flight safety at Biman, noted 10 major bird strike incidents between May 2023 and May 2024.

Referring to the Jeju Air crash, he urged CAAB to implement measures to deter birds in and around the airport to avoid such accidents.

Capt AAMA Shahsuzzaman, head of safety management at US-Bangla Airlines, said HSIA's bird strike rate is three times higher than the global average.

Citing International Air Transport Agency data from January 2023 to October 2024, he said HSIA recorded 1.73 bird strikes per 1,000 flights, compared to 0.5 at other international airports.

Talking to reporters, Capt Kamrul Islam, head of safety at Air Astra, said bird strikes can occur

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

## Dismissed BDR members, families demand justice

## Continue sit-in at Shaheed Minar, warn of 'Shahbagh blockade' if demands not met

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Families of the dismissed BDR (now Border Guard Bangladesh) members have vowed not to back out of their seven point demand, including bail or release of innocent members of the paramilitary force arrested after the 2009 Pilkhana massacre.

They have decided to spend the night at the Central Shaheed Minar to press home their demands, which also include the withdrawal of all false cases filed after the incident against the force members.

The family members warned they would "blockade Shahbagh" if their demands remained unmet, during today's (Thursday) hearing at the metropolitan special tribunal-2 of Dhaka.

Mahin Sarker, a member of the executive committee of Students Against Discrimination, who joined the protesters, confirmed the developments to The Daily Star.

"We will wait for the court orders. If the demands are not met, then we will block Shahbagh and continue our protest," he said.

Mahin said, "Some 2,000 people, including the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Families of dismissed BDR (now BGB) members gather at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka yesterday, demanding justice for the victims of the 2009 Pilkhana massacre, and reinstatement of dismissed personnel. Police intercept their procession at Shahbagh, inset, while they were marching towards the state guest house Jamuna, the chief adviser's residence.

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# 'She suffered in jail, was deprived of treatment'

Khaleda's lawyers tell SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's lawyers yesterday told the Supreme Court that she (Khaleda) suffered in jail and was humiliated and deprived of proper treatment for many years because of the Zia Orphanage Trust case, which was filed on false allegations.

"There was no evidence in support of the allegations brought in the case... I went to the authorities concerned for her proper treatment but she did not get it," senior advocate Zainul Abedin, a lawyer for Khaleda Zia, said.

He said this while presenting arguments before a five-member bench headed by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed during the second day's hearing on Khaleda's appeals against a 2018 High Court verdict that increased her jail sentence from five to ten years.

Khaleda's another lawyer AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon said this was a politically motivated case.

He appealed to the apex court to grant the appeal and acquit her from the charges.

The former prime minister, aged 79, landed in jail on February 8, 2018, after a Dhaka special court sentenced her to five years in the case.

While five other accused, including her son Tarique Rahman, were given 10 years' imprisonment for misappropriating over Tk 2.1 crore intended for orphans, the special court cited Khaleda's age and status to impose a lighter sentence.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

# Special cell on July uprising formed

It will ensure rehabilitation of victims, documentation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-discrimination Student Movement yesterday formed a special cell on the July mass uprising to ensure medical care for the injured and rehabilitation of the martyrs' families, documentation of the uprising, bringing the attackers under trial and building a martyrdom memorial.

Arif Sohel, member secretary of the platform, made the announcement before the journalists at its central office in the capital's Banglamotor.

"We thought the interim government and others would work giving the highest priority to those who were martyred and injured in the July mass uprising. The initiatives taken in this regard are completely inadequate," said Arif.

"We are not able to properly evaluate the injured brothers and sisters and martyrs due to various reasons. That is very sad for us. Because the freedom we enjoy today is only because of their sacrifice," he also said.

The events of the July uprising are also not being properly documented, added Arif.

THE CELL

Hasan Imam, who is associated with the student platform, was made the secretary of the cell.

The cell consists of four teams. Of the teams, a 19-member one will work for medical care and rehabilitation, a 16-member team will make the documentation, a five-member team of lawyers will accelerate trial proceedings and an eight-member team will work for the memorial.



**CMCH admits**

FROM PAGE 5

"We found evidence of hill cutting. After the hearing, the DoE will take legal action against those responsible," said Urmi Sarker, assistant director of the DoE (Chittogram metro unit).

During a visit to the site, this correspondent observed that the hill's slope had been levelled. Two excavators were seen at the spot.

"We are installing cement blocks on the slope," said a worker, speaking anonymously.

According to Forest Department data, the CMCH authority only had permission to cut trees on flat land.

"We approved tree cutting on level land, but CMCH cut many trees on the hill without permission," said Jaynal Abedin, assistant conservator of Forest Department, Chattogram North Forest Division.

The National Economic Council approved a Tk 284 crore project on May 9 to construct the specialised burn and plastic surgery unit.

The new 150-bed unit will include outpatient and indoor departments, an emergency department, 10 ICU beds, 20 HDU beds for adult patients, and five HDU beds for children.

The project, funded jointly by Bangladesh and China with contributions of Tk 104.93 crore and Tk 179.83 crore, respectively, is set to be completed by June 2026.

**984 brick kilns**

FROM PAGE 5

from Bamonerbasa village in Aditmari upazila, has also suffered since selling the topsoil from his four bighas of farmland six years ago.

"I have to deal with stagnant water while growing paddy, and weeds hinder crop growth. The land has become uneven and less fertile," he said.

However, Rafiqul Islam, a brick kiln owner from Roumari upazila in Kurigram, denied allegations of pressuring farmers to sell topsoil. "We purchase topsoil from farmers for brick manufacturing and have not faced any objections from the agriculture department. Farmers willingly sell their topsoil," he claimed. Obaidur Rahman Mandal, additional director of DAE in Rangpur region, said, "DAE officials are working to raise awareness among farmers about not selling their farmland's topsoil."

**North shivers in cold**

FROM PAGE 3

Weather Observatory, said the lowest temperature in Dinajpur yesterday was 15 degrees Celsius in the morning, with 89 percent humidity.

"Although there was no fog, the wind speed increased from 2 kmph early morning to 8-10 kmph by 9:00am yesterday, making temperatures feel much colder. The temperature may drop further by 5-7 degrees Celsius in the daytime and 2-3 degrees Celsius at night over the next few days," he said.

The Rangpur Meteorological Office reported minimum temperatures of 15.7 degrees Celsius in Lalmonirhat, 15 degrees in Kurigram, and 15.5 degrees in Rangpur yesterday morning.

The absence of sunlight and overcast skies intensified the cold. "It was impossible to work in the field in the morning. I managed to go at noon but couldn't continue due to the cold," said Anwar Hossain, 55, a farmer from Fulgach village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Streets in Lalmonirhat town were mostly deserted, while outdoor activities in Dinajpur came to a halt due to the cold wind and drizzle.

Khalek Mia, a rickshaw puller in Lalmonirhat town, said there were few passengers as most people stayed home in this weather.

"I earned less than half of my daily income. Still, I had to come out; otherwise, how'd I feed my family?" he asked.

Delwar Hossain, an auto-rickshaw driver in Dinajpur town, echoed him.

"The drizzle made it worse. Hardly a few could brave this weather and go outside for a livelihood. If it rains more, the cold will become even more unbearable," said Md Abdur Razzaq of North Gosaipur village in Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

**23 accused get**

FROM PAGE 3

General Md Abdul Jabbar Bhuiyan represented the state during hearing.

Mamun told the court that there is no specific allegation against the accused of their involvement in the incident. He said the informant, who filed the case, is not a family member of the people who were killed or injured in the clash.

Most of the accused are over 80. Among them, some are former secretaries, university professors and people who held important positions and it is not possible for them to be involved in any clash, he argued.

Jabbar Bhuiyan told the court there should not be any faction among the Tabligh Jamaat men.

After the HC passed the orders, Mamun spoke to media on the Supreme Court premises.

He said even the HC, during the hearing, has said everyone holds a deep respect for the Tabligh Jamaat members because of their devotion to Allah, and they should avoid any divisions among themselves.

Mamun said the gathering of the Tabligh Jamaat devotees in Bangladesh is the second largest congregation of Muslims after the hajj. But unfortunately, the Tabligh Jamaat devotees split in two factions due to misunderstanding among themselves.

**Gayeshwar**

FROM PAGE 3

court set up at Bakshibazar Alia Madrasa near the Old Central Jail on Nazimuddin Road in Dhaka on January 30, 2018.

At that time, BNP leaders and activists were chanting slogans on the street near Paribagh. Then the leaders and activists clashed with the police.

Following the incident, Sub-inspector Md Mohibullah of Ramna Model Police Station filed a case.

After an investigation, SI Mohammad Saiful Islam Khan of the Detective Branch submitted a charge sheet against Gayeshwar and 172 other party men on January 29, 2020.

**Dismissed BDR**

FROM PAGE 3

family members of the BDR members, are now holding a sit-in programme at the Shaheed Minar, and we will continue through the night."

Earlier, they gathered at the Shaheed Minar around 10:30am yesterday. Around 12:30pm, they brought out a rally and headed towards the state guest house Jamuna, the chief adviser's residence, witnesses said.

However, the rally was obstructed by the police at Shahbagh.

"Since morning, those dismissed from their jobs after the BDR mutiny and their families gathered in the Shaheed Minar area. They were attempting to march towards Jamuna but were stopped in front of Shahbagh Police Station, where they stayed until 5:30pm," said Khalid Mansur, officer-in-charge of the police station.

He said traffic movement returned to normal after the evening.

A small delegation, including Mahin Sarker, went to the Chief Adviser's Office and submitted a memorandum.

According to the memorandum, their other demands include the

formation of a fair and impartial investigation committee to probe the deaths of 74 people, including 57 army officers, 10 BDR members, and seven civilians, in the 2009 Pilkhana massacre.

They also demanded the reinstatement of all BDR officials and trainees of the 76th batch, who were dismissed after the mutiny, with full pay and other benefits.

The family members appealed to the chief adviser, describing the dire circumstances faced by the sacked BDR members. Many are reportedly living in inhumane conditions, facing social neglect, contempt, and mental health issues, with some even resorting to suicide.

**She suffered**

FROM PAGE 3

On November 11, the Appellate Division stayed the HC decision and allowed Khaleda to file appeals challenging it. Her appeals seek to overturn the judgement and secure her acquittal.

The SC will continue hearing on the appeals today.

**Secure Dhaka airport from bird**

FROM PAGE 3

allow pilots to land in anytime but typically occur during take-offs or landings. The severity of damage depends on the size and number of birds or the intensity of the collision.

"ILS is a radio signal and lighting array-based precision system that provides pilots with vertical and horizontal guidance during landings in thick fog. Its absence wastes time, energy, and money, causing passenger suffering and financial losses for airlines," he said.

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan assured that steps are being taken to improve safety standards.

"We understand the concerns and anxieties of the public. I would like to assure you that every possible step is being taken to ensure the highest standards of safety in our airspace, as recent tragic aviation disasters remind us of the importance of vigilance," he said.

He urged the airlines to adopt a "just culture" to facilitate the implementation of Safety Management Systems (SMS).

Group Captain Kamrul Islam, executive director of HSIA, said they are working with Dhaka North City Corporation to manage

open garbage and butcher houses and to divert bird habitats away from the airport area. "We are also implementing reactive, proactive, and long term measures to address bird strike hazards," he added.

**BNP factional**

FROM PAGE 5

Other family members accused Mostafizur's group of orchestrating the attack.

Mostafizur could not be reached for comment.

He previously alleged that Ruhul Amin's group, backed by Awami League leaders, had attacked his supporters earlier in the week, injuring five of them.

Superintendent of Police Mohammad Touhidul Arif said additional police personnel were deployed in the area.

"The situation is now under control," he said.

**PRAYER TIMING**  
JANUARY 9

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:30 7:00  
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:35 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**BANGLADESH FREEDOM FIGHTERS' WELFARE TRUST**

Ministry of Liberation War Affairs

Swadhinata Bhaban, 88, Motijheel Commercial Area, Dhaka-1000.

[www.bffwt.gov.bd](http://www.bffwt.gov.bd)

**REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (EOI)**

1	Ministry	:	Ministry of Liberation War Affairs.
2	Name of inviting Agency	:	Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Welfare Trust (BFFWT), Dhaka.
3	Procuring entity name	:	Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Welfare Trust.
4	Expression of Interest for Selection of	:	Audit/C.A firm for preparing report upon appraisal of movable and immovable properties of Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Welfare Trust.
5	EoI Ref. No. & Date	:	48.01.0000.202.14.546.25/1046 Date: 08/01/2025

**Key information:**

6	Procurement Sub Method	:	Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS)
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**Funding information:**

7	Budget and Source of Fund	:	BFFWT own fund.
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**Particular information:**

8	EoI Closing Date and Time	:	26/01/2025 at 2.00 PM
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**Information for applicant:**

9	Brief Description of Assignment	:	Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Welfare Trust was established in 1972 by the President's Order No. 94/1972 for the welfare of the war wounded freedom fighters and the families of the martyred heroic freedom fighters, who participated in the great war of independence of Bangladesh. In 1972, 18 establishments (09 industrial and 09 commercial) were handed over to the Trust on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh. Later 11 industrial establishments in 1978, 01 in 1986 and 02 in 1989 were handed over to the trust by the government. Besides these, 04 industrial unit were established by trust's own initiative. The total number of commercial and industrial establishment is 36. 07 establishments were taken back by the government in the financial year 1982-83 due to liabilities and 8 establishments were converted into 3 establishments due to continuous losses. Out of the remaining 24 establishments, some establishments have been divided into multiple plots. At present the number of establishments and plots has now increased to 34. The establishments and plots are located in Dhaka cities, Chittagong district, Gazipur and Narayanganj district. In order to ensure more services to the beneficiaries of the trust through the protection and proper use of the properties of the Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Welfare Trust, a full accounting of the total movable and immovable properties of the trust and assessment of the liabilities and debts along with the valuation in the current condition.
---	---------------------------------	---	--

Location	No. of establishments and plots	Land area
Dhaka city	20	25.85 acre
Gazipur District	03	6.80 acre
Narayanganj District	03	4.64 acre
Chittagong District	08	35.09 acre

For auditing report, work allocation will be

- a. Present status of all the properties
- b. Identification and listing with detail description (e.g. total area, location etc.) of all movable and immovable properties
- c. Finding problem/problems of properties and recommendations to overcome
- d. Valuation of all the properties (Govt. mouza rate and market rate)
- e. Determination of liability of properties

10	Experiences, Resources, Delivery Capacity Requires and Submission of EoI	:	Audit firms must fulfill the following criteria: a. Audit firms must be enlisted with Bangladesh Bank for Auditing Banks and Financial Institutions. b. Audit/C.A firm with minimum 10 years of general experience since established. Must enclosed up to date firm establishment certificate. c. The previous appointment letter/experience certificate/work order/notification of award of auditing of Banks or Financial Institutions must be enclosed.



UDIT NARAYAN  
survives  
building fire

A fire broke out late Monday (January 6) night on the 11th floor of the 13-story Sky Pan building in Andheri's Oberoi Complex, a residential tower known to house singer Udit Narayan. The fire broke out around 10 pm in the B wing of the high-rise, while Narayan's residence is located in the adjacent A wing.

Firefighters successfully brought the fire under control after nearly four hours. Recalling the harrowing experience, Narayan admitted it had taken a psychological toll on him. "This incident has left a deep impact on me and will take some time to overcome. Hearing about such tragedies is one thing, but living through them makes you truly understand the fear and distress they bring," he shared.

During the fire incident, a senior citizen lost his life, and another individual was hospitalised due to severe smoke inhalation, officials confirmed.

ASIF AKBAR  
kicks off  
the year  
with two  
new songs

Popular singer Asif Akbar has kicked off the new year on a high note with the release of two brand new tracks, *Mon Jane* and *Aay Phire Aay*. According to the singer, both songs have been well-received amongst the audiences.

*Aay Phire Aay*, released on Tuesday (January 7), showcases

Asif in a new light. The music video features him performing with a band setup, blending rock and metal elements. The song was composed by Rajib Mona, with lyrics by Joy Chakraborty. The track is available on Splendid Audio's YouTube channel.

Meanwhile, Asif's other new release, *Mon Jane*, came out on

January 5 on Dhruba Music Station's YouTube channel. This song was composed and arranged by musician and singer Imran Mahmudul, with lyrics by Snahashis Ghosh. A story-driven music video accompanies the song, directed by Saikat Reza and starring models Sajib, Mahtaram, and Jim.

## Disney+ greenlights pilot for 'Holes' series

Disney+ has greenlit a pilot for a *Holes* television adaptation, Variety reports. Based on Louis Sachar's 1998 novel, the series follows a teen girl at a detention camp, where digging holes for a harsh Warden hides a secret purpose.

Sachar's novel follows Stanley Yelnats, a boy sent to Camp Green Lake, where he uncovers links between his family's past and

the camp's secrets. A bestseller, *Holes* earned the Newbery Medal and National Book Award.

Executive Producer Drew Goddard, whose mother introduced him to the book, shared, "Bringing this project to life feels like the perfect way to honour her." The 2003 film, featuring Shia LaBeouf and Sigourney Weaver, was a critical and commercial success.

'Squid Game' Season 2  
breaks Netflix viewership  
record in 11 days

The second season of *Squid Game* has smashed Netflix records, accumulating 126.2 million views in just 11 days. After an explosive start with 68 million views in four days, it gained another 58.2 million views in its first full week, becoming the fastest Netflix series to reach such a milestone. The season jumped from No. 7 to No. 2 on Netflix's most popular non-English-language shows, behind only its very first season. The first season additionally saw a resurgence with 13.6 million views. On the film side, the Taron Egerton starrer *Carry On* has been holding the top spot for the fourth consecutive week with 17.4 million views.

## COUNTRYWIDE

## BORO CULTIVATION IN BAGERHAT

Rising production  
costs worry farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Boro cultivation is going on in full swing in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila, the largest paddy-producing zone of the district.

Local farmers are busy planting seedlings of Boro paddy despite the biting cold.

Growers said they are a bit worried this season because they will have to spend more than they did last season for cultivation as prices of almost everything have gone up.

Growers say they had to procure paddy seeds, fuel fertilisers and other essentials at high prices. Wages of farm labourers have also been increased, adding to their woes.

This year price of each kilogramme of hybrid variety seeds leaped to Tk 380 to Tk 450 from Tk 350 to Tk 400 last year, while a farm worker's wage rose to Tk 700 to Tk 800, compared to Tk 500 to Tk 600 last season, they said.

Each kilogram of hybrid seeds can cover only 15 decimals of land, making the additional cost a further burden for many cultivators.

However, farmers are quite optimistic about getting a good yield, if the weather

remains favourable during the peak cultivation period.

Farmers said Boro cultivation started around three weeks ago and will continue for a few weeks more.

While visiting Kachua, Maghia, Charkathi, Sangdia and Afra areas recently, this correspondent saw farmers busy either preparing their lands or sowing Boro seedlings.

Farmer Lalu Bali of Afra village said, "I've been continuing paddy plantation work with only two labourers as I have to pay at least Tk 700 to each."

If we get adequate irrigation water on time, I am hopeful of getting a good harvest this season, Lalu said.

Sources at the upazila agriculture office said so far about 20 to 25 percent of sowing have been completed.

Kachua Upazila Agriculture Officer Akash Bairagi said a total of 7,609 hectares of land in the upazila have been brought under Boro and Ufshi paddy cultivation.

Of them, hybrid Boro paddy will be cultivated on 6,709 hectares land.

Agricultural officials play active roles in guiding farmers at every field, from preparing land to transplanting paddy seeds.



Farmers plant saplings of Boro paddy at a field. The photo was taken from Sangdia village in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

## Freedom fighter

FROM PAGE 2

the day of the incident. They stated that the only connection he has to the case is that the 135th accused's name is also Aiyub.

Contacted, Jakir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sakhipur Police Station, told The Daily Star that police arrested Aiyub Khan from Nolua village of Sakhipur on Tuesday as an accused of the case following an investigation. However, his age has been mistakenly mentioned as 32 in the case statement.

Besides, police also arrested Al Amin Sarkar, 27, former joint general secretary of the Baheratoli unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, in the same case.

Mizanur Rahman, court inspector in Tangail, told The Daily Star that both accused were sent to jail

after they were produced before a court.

According to the case statement, the anti-discrimination protesters brought out a procession at Sakhipur upazila headquarters on August 3. The accused were already prepared with firearms and local lethal weapons there.

Later, when the procession reached the Taltala intersection, they attacked the protesters. Several students were injured in the attack and admitted to the local hospital for treatment.

On August 26, Morshedul Haque, convenor of Sakhipur municipal unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, filed a case against 167 people, including former MP Anupom Shahjahan Joy, with Sakhipur Police Station in this regard.

Council (ICC), which also states that when a national federation [ECB in this instance] suspends a player from bowling in its domestic competitions, the suspension is automatically recognised and enforced by the ICC in international cricket and by all national cricket federations.

BCB sources confirmed that all bowling tests Shakib had gone through before or will go through in the future, those tests will have to be done in affiliation with ECB. Even if Shakib undergoes a test individually at an ICC-accredited centre again, it will have to be done in coordination with ECB.

However, the current development significantly hampers Shakib's chances of getting into the Champions Trophy squad as he will have to play on as a batter unless he is able to clarify his bowling action through another test in the coming weeks.

Shakib will not be able to bowl in international cricket as per the regulations of the International Cricket

## ACC sues two sons of S Alam

FROM PAGE 12

case statement. In one instance, United Super Traders secured a loan of Tk 890 crore on December 15, 2021. However, no goods were bought or sold against the loan.

Fake documents facilitated the withdrawal, distribution and laundering of the funds.

The loan ceiling was later raised to Tk 1,000 crore through further irregularities. By December 5, 2023, Tk 995 crore had been withdrawn under 28 deals, violating banking policies and Islami Bank's Shariah principles.

In 2023, fake purchase and sale documents were

Jennifer Lopez  
and Ben Affleck  
finalise divorce

Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez have finalised their divorce through a quiet settlement in September, a month after Lopez filed, citing "irreconcilable differences."

The couple used mediation to resolve the split, with no spousal support involved, and Lopez also dropped Affleck's surname legally.

Their relationship, which rekindled in 2021 after nearly two decades, led to two weddings—one in Las Vegas and another in Georgia.

The couple has no children together, but they have continued to spend time with each other's respective children in the months since they split.

WHAT'S  
THE HAPS?July Revolution  
in Posters

The Arts and Production Department of Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy launched a live and interactive AR-VR (Augmented Virtual Reality) exhibition titled July Revolution on Posters, featuring Debashish Chakraborty's artworks on the July Uprising. Chakraborty's impactful posters have ignited socio-political dialogue, marking a milestone in Bangladeshi art history. Audiences can explore the context and meaning interactively through a VR controller, along with related structures, documentaries, audio, and video content.

Date: January 7-19

Time: 11am-8pm

Venue: Shilpkala Academy



## Freedom fighter

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## Be careful with phones

FROM PAGE 12

mugging are young, aged between 15 and 22, and they are getting involved in such crimes due to addiction.

The DMP chief said, "We have taken extensive measures to prevent mugging incidents by increasing patrol teams and engaging DB teams. As per this week's data, such incidents have decreased compared to last week. We are hopeful that we will be able to bring it under control."

The DMP boss also said it will require time to change the force's behaviour.

"It is not possible to suddenly change 40,000

members without proper training. Therefore, we have already started organising programmes. You will soon notice the change."

"The city dwellers have deeply realised the consequences of police inaction after August 5. You need the police. We have many shortcomings, but we are working to overcome them and provide you with better services."

The DMP chief admitted that mugging, looting, and robbery incidents have significantly increased after August 5, but they are able to contain the crimes to some extent in the last couple of months.

At the other end of the spectrum, Afghanistan remains at the bottom of the list, ranked 106th, with its passport granting visa-free access to just 26 destinations. Just above Afghanistan are Syria (105th), Iraq (104th), and Yemen (103rd).

The Henley & Partners Passport Index provides a key measure of global mobility and reflects broader trends in international travel freedom.

## 'What can we do?'

FROM PAGE 12

Bangladesh sought Hasina's extradition through a note verbal sent to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs on December 23.

Asked about New

Delhi's response to the communication, Touhid Hossain told reporters: "We have not yet received any response to our letter."

On Monday, the Department of

Immigration and Passports cancelled the passports of 97 people, including Hasina, for their alleged involvement in enforced disappearances and killings during protests in July.

## 'Dangerous times' ahead

Says Nobel laureate Ressa after Meta ends US fact-checking programme

AFP, Manila

Philippine Nobel laureate Maria Ressa yesterday warned of "extremely dangerous times ahead" in an interview with AFP after social media giant Meta ended its US fact-checking programme on Facebook and Instagram.

Ressa and the Rappler news site she co-founded have spent years fighting online disinformation while battling court cases filed under former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte, whose drug war killed thousands of people.

The veteran journalist and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2021 said Meta's decision meant "extremely dangerous times ahead" for journalism, democracy and social media users.

"Mark Zuckerberg says it's a free speech issue - that's completely wrong," Ressa told AFP at Rappler's newsroom in Manila. "Only if you're profit driven can you claim that; only if you want power and money can you claim that. This is about safety."

## SCAM CENTRE RAID Philippines arrests 400 foreigners

AFP, Manila

Around 400 foreign nationals were arrested yesterday in a "large-scale" raid on a suspected online scam farm in Manila, the national immigration agency said.

Authorities raided a building and found workers allegedly engaged in online scam operations targeting victims abroad.

International concern has grown in recent years over similar scam operations in Asia.

"Their operations were found to be in violation of immigration laws and posed significant risks to the public," Fortunato Manahan, the Bureau of Immigration intelligence division chief, said.



A firefighter conducts search and rescue operation with a rescue dog at a village following the earthquake that struck Tingri county, in Shigatse, Tibet Autonomous Region, China yesterday. More than 400 people trapped by rubble have been rescued, Chinese officials said yesterday, with an unknown number still unaccounted for in freezing weather a day after a strong tremor rocked the Himalayan foothills.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Wildfires tear through LA area

More than 30,000 people evacuate their homes; emergency declared

REUTERS, Los Angeles

More than 30,000 people evacuated their homes as a wildfire tore through a coastal area of Los Angeles in just a few hours, and a second blaze some 30 miles (50 km) inland was rapidly spreading yesterday.

Numerous buildings were destroyed and nearly 3,000 acres (1,200 hectares) were burned in the upscale Pacific Palisades area between the beach towns of Santa Monica and Malibu, officials said. The area is home to many film and music stars.

Highways were jammed with people fleeing the inferno as plumes of smoke and flames rose in the sky over Los Angeles on Tuesday night. The fire has not been contained by yesterday morning and Governor Gavin Newsom has declared a state of emergency.



Pacific Palisades resident Cindy Festa said that as she evacuated, fires were "this close to the cars," demonstrating with her thumb and forefinger.

"People left their cars on Palisades Drive. Burning up the hillside. The palm trees - everything is going," Festa said from her car.

A fire official told local television station KTLA that several people were

injured in the Palisades Fire, some with burns to faces and hands. One female firefighter had suffered a head injury.

Hollywood actor James Woods said on X he was able to evacuate his Pacific Palisades house but added: "I do not know at this moment if our home is still standing."

The second blaze, dubbed the Eaton Fire, broke out some 30 miles (50 km) inland in Altadena, near Pasadena, and increased in size to 1,000 acres (400 hectares) from 200 acres in a few hours, according to Cal Fire.

Almost 100 residents from a nursing home in Pasadena were evacuated, CBS News said. Video showed elderly residents, many in wheelchairs and on gurneys, crowded onto a smoky and windswept parking lot as fire trucks and ambulances attended.



Pro-Yoon protesters take part in a rally to support impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol near his official residence in Seoul, South Korea yesterday. Yoon faces a new and potentially more robust attempt to arrest him for insurrection after a top investigator vowed to do whatever it takes to break a security blockade and take in the embattled leader.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 'Le Papotin' run by autistic journos hits newsstands

AFP, Paris

A French magazine produced by autistic journalists went on sale on newsstands for the first time yesterday, further raising the profile of a project that has already made waves on television.

'Le Papotin' has an editorial team of around 40 journalists with autism spectrum disorders who produce a yearly magazine that features high-profile celebrity interviews and cultural content.

Normally print editions are sold via its website, but they were distributed to around 3,000 shops and newsstands in France, with a run of 10,000 copies -- three times the usual number, owner Prisma Media announced.

Prisma, the biggest magazine publisher in France, said it had "worked with its different partners" to ensure 'Le Papotin' was distributed for free with a cover price of 10 euros. The front page of the 2025 edition features French musician Philippe Katerine who leapt to global fame during the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics in July when he appeared painted blue and almost naked in a controversial scene that was likened to Jesus's "Last Supper".

The idea behind Le Papotin has been adapted for a hit television show that sees the magazine's journalists interview top public figures, with often touching and revealing results.



### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

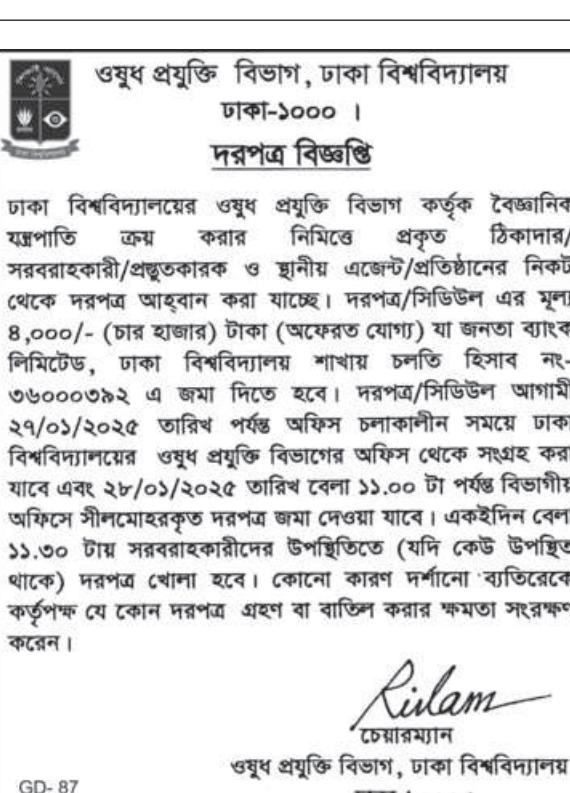
Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance  
Support to Sustainable Graduation Project  
Building # 08, Planning Commission Complex  
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

Memo No: 09.00.0000.228.07.129.23.12

Date: 08/01/2025

### Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) for Hiring of consultancy services for a study on "WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies: Impact and Way Forward for Bangladesh"

General Information	
1. Ministry / Division	Economic Relations Division (ERD), Ministry of Finance
2. Agency	Development Effectiveness Wing, ERD
3. Name of Procuring Entity	Project Director, Support to Sustainable Graduation Project (SSGP)
4. Procuring Entity package	SD-17-20(4)/24-25
5. Procuring Entity District	Dhaka
6. Expression of Interest for	WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies: Impact and Way Forward for Bangladesh
7. EOI Ref No.	09.00.0000.228.07.129.23.12
8. Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	08/01/2025
Key Information	
9. Procurement method	QCBS (Quality and Cost-Based Selection)
Funding Information	
10. Budget and Source of Funds	Development Budget
11. Development Partners	DRGA-CF, Japan
Particular Information	
12. Project/ Programme Code	223034000
13. Project/ Programme Name	Support to Sustainable Graduation Project (SSGP)
14. EoI Closing Date and Time	29/01/2025 up to 12.00 PM
Information for Applicants	
15. Brief Description of the Assignment	Marine overfishing threatens marine sustainability and food security, worsened by harmful fisheries subsidies and illegal fishing. SDG 14.6 aims to eliminate such subsidies. In 2022, WTO members agreed to ban subsidies linked to IUU fishing and overfished stocks, with exemptions for developing countries. However, no consensus was reached on subsidies. In Ministerial Conference held in 2023, a related draft proposal also failed to reach consensus. Now Support to Sustainable Graduation Project (SSGP) plans a study to assess the WTO agreement's impact and devise strategies. ( <b>Details in the ToR</b> )
16. Qualification & Experiences of the Consulting Firm	The shortlisting criteria are: 1. It shall have the legal capacity to enter into the contract with a minimum of 05 (Five) years of general experiences in providing research/study/consulting services. 2. The consulting firm must have experience to successfully complete 04 (Four) research/studies to the Government of Bangladesh/UN bodies/public universities/development partners/multinational companies/INGOs/reputed research organizations in the related field over the last 05 years as specific experience. 3. Reputation of an international standing in the delivery of credible analytical report; with minimum 03 years of experience. 4. Availability of appropriate experiences and professional qualifications among Applicant's staff and adequate resources to carry out the assignment. 5. The required average annual turnover of the consulting firm shall be at least of the amount of Tk. 100 (One Hundred) Lac over the last three years. 6. A capacity statement summarizing their facilities and area of expertise (IT equipment, logistics support, transport and office space including technical resources and facilities available for the service). Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. Consultants are requested to submit the following supporting documents in support of the above-mentioned criteria: (i) Up to date relevant/restraining papers of the firm(s); (ii) JV agreement/letter of intent (if applicable); (iii) Firm's brochure; (iv) Audited financial reports for last three years; (v) Service experience record of Last five (05) years (including nature, total cost of Contract, total input in terms of man month, employer, location of service etc.); (vi) Updated trade license; (vii) Turnover of the consulting firm; (viii) any other information necessary to substantiate the shortlisting criteria listed above and/or included in the TOR. (ix) Undertaking that the firm has not been denied by any government organization or by development partner. ( <b>Details in the ToR</b> )
17. Other Details	A copy of the Terms of Reference (ToR) may be obtained from the address below during 09:00 to 17:00 hours or download from the ERD website at: www.erd.gov.bd. EoI shall be submitted on or before 29/01/2025 at 12:00 noon in sealed envelope delivered to the undersigned and be clearly marked "Request for Expressions of Interest for Hiring of consultancy services for a study on "WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies: Impact and Way Forward for Bangladesh"
Procuring Entity Details	
18. Name & Designation of the Official Inviting EoI	A. H. M. Jahangir, Project Director (Additional Secretary)
19. Address of the Official Inviting EoI	Building # 08, Room# 11, Economic Relations Division, Planning Commission Complex, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
20. Contact Details of the Official Inviting EoI	Tel. No.: 2222216710
21. The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject any/all EoI's without showing reason whatsoever.	e-mail: wingchie10@erd.gov.bd



GD- 88

## Taiwan 'hyped' sea cable damage claims: China

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday accused Taiwan's ruling party of having "deliberately hyped" an incident in which a Chinese-owned ship was suspected of damaging a submarine telecoms cable.

Taiwanese authorities this week said they were investigating a Chinese-owned cargo ship suspected of dragging its anchor over an international subsea telecoms cable northeast of the island.

"DPP authorities have... out of thin air deliberately hyped the subsea cable incident as a so-called 'grey zone threat' from the mainland, fully showing they will not let go of unscrupulous 'anti-China' counter China' tricks," state broadcaster CCTV quoted Taiwan Affairs Office spokesman Chen Binhus as saying, referring to the island's ruling Democratic Progressive Party.

Taiwan's top China policy body, the Mainland Affairs Council, hit back yesterday, saying the prosecutors' investigation was "based on relevant evidence" and there was no "anti-China" issue.

The Cameroonian-flagged Shunxing39 was intercepted by Taiwan's coast guard on Friday after Chunghwa Telecom reported damage to a subsea cable that is part of the Trans-Pacific Express Cable System.

## Antarctic sea ice rebounds from record lows

AFP, Paris

Antarctic sea ice rebounded in December after a long period of record lows, US scientists said, giving pause to speculation that Earth's frozen continent could be undergoing a permanent change.

The rate of sea ice loss during the warmer spring months of November and December slowed to well below average, the US National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) said in a statement on Tuesday.

This followed a "prolonged period of record to near record daily lows" in 2023 and 2024 -- the hottest years in the history books for global temperature rises driven by climate change.

By the end of 2024, Antarctic sea ice extent had recovered to 7.3 million square kilometres (2.8 million square miles) -- very close to the 1981 to 2010 average, NSIDC said.

*A. H. M. Jahangir  
Project Director (Additional Secretary)*

## Impunity for border killings must end

Justice for Felani and other victims is long overdue

It is unacceptable that even after the passing of 14 years following the gruesome murder of Felani Khatun, justice still remains elusive. This simultaneously reflects Bangladesh authorities' lack of initiative in pursuing justice as well as the Indian authorities' refusal to ensure accountability, both of which have contributed to a culture of impunity enabling such border killings to persist.

On January 7, 2011, 15-year-old Felani was shot dead by a member of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) while attempting to cross the barbed-wire fence near Kurigram and West Bengal's Koch Bihar. As she climbed down a makeshift ladder, her dress became entangled in the fence. While stuck, she was spotted by BSF personnel, and constable Amiya Ghosh shot her. According to Kirty Roy, secretary of a West Bengal-based rights organisation, the BSF could have apprehended Felani without using lethal force and presented her in court for breaking the law. Instead, she was shot and left hanging on the fence for hours, bleeding to death. Even after shooting her, the BSF could have rescued her and provided medical attention, but they chose not to.

Despite this inhumane act, a BSF court acquitted Amiya Ghosh of any wrongdoing, with a subsequent BSF court also upholding the verdict. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court of India, set to hear final arguments in this case on January 8, postponed the hearing for unspecified reasons. Will Felani's family ever get justice? After 14 years, Indian authorities seem to have little interest in this regard. This impunity—and the evident disregard for Bangladeshi lives—has allowed such killings to continue unabated. The most recent casualty is Zahur Ali who, earlier this week, was allegedly beaten to death by BSF members and Indian citizens along the border.

According to *Ain o Salish Kendra* (ASK), 31 Bangladeshis were killed by BSF in 2023, 23 in 2022, and 18 in 2021. Thus, at least 522 deaths of Bangladeshis were recorded between 2009 and 2020. One cannot help but ask: why is the number of casualties so high despite India's repeated promises to reduce them to zero? How should Bangladesh respond to such killings and to India's claim of being a "close friend"? The death toll at the India-Bangladesh border starkly contrasts with the far fewer fatalities along the India-Pakistan border, despite the latter's hostile relationship. When a so-called "friendly" neighbour causes such loss of life, how can this relationship be viewed as genuine friendship?

The interim government must prioritise justice for all Bangladeshi victims of BSF violence, starting with Felani Khatun. It must also demand an immediate end to these killings. If Indian authorities remain uncooperative, Bangladesh should consider taking the issue to international courts and actively raising it on global platforms, as the Jatiya Nagorik Committee recently suggested. It is time for Bangladesh to adopt a firm stance against the BSF's callous treatment of our citizens and India's persistent failure to address this grave issue. Impunity must end, and justice must prevail.

## Don't neglect threat of a major earthquake

Raise awareness, ensure strict enforcement of building regulations

We are concerned about the lack of preparedness by relevant government agencies to face a major earthquake in Dhaka, despite warnings that it is one of the riskiest cities in the world. According to the Earthquake Disaster Risk Index, Dhaka tops the list of the 20 most vulnerable cities globally. The occurrence of two recent earthquakes within a week has heightened concerns about whether we are taking this threat seriously. Fortunately, neither the January 3 earthquake originating in Myanmar nor the January 7 one in Tibet (with a magnitude of 7.1) directly affected Dhaka. However, researchers indicate that a major quake could strike the city at any moment. We have no time to remain ill-prepared for this dreadful prospect.

Research highlights that the Indo-Burma subduction zone, encompassing Sylhet and Chattogram, is accumulating strain capable of generating a significant seismic event of up to magnitude 8, which is alarming. Additionally, the Dauki Fault is another highly active seismic zone. Over the past decade, the region has experienced 550 earthquakes of magnitude 4 or higher. Experts warn that these smaller tremors could be precursors to a larger earthquake potentially devastating Dhaka.

Unfortunately, despite experiencing minor tremors over the years, our response has been minimal. Dense urbanisation and poorly enforced building codes naturally put Dhaka at high risk of catastrophic damage in the event of a major earthquake. Its geological location, combined with human and economic factors, exacerbates this vulnerability. According to a recent RAJUK study, an earthquake of 6.9 magnitude, along the Madhupur Faultline near Dhaka, could demolish about 865,000 buildings. If such an event occurs during the day, around 210,000 people could die, with another 229,000 injured. The financial loss would also be immense, estimated at \$25 billion, with an additional \$44 billion required for rebuilding.

Therefore, the government must take decisive action to mitigate these risks. Immediate steps should include extensive mass awareness campaigns, regular earthquake drills, disaster education for children, volunteer training, and coordination between government and non-governmental agencies for rescue operations. In the long term, it is critical to strictly enforce the National Building Code and demolish the risky buildings. Given Dhaka's increasing vulnerability, we can no longer afford to remain oblivious or inactive.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### Mahmoud Abbas elected

On this day in 2005, Mahmoud Abbas, who was a founder of Fatah in the 1950s and served briefly as prime minister of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 2003 under Yasser Arafat, was elected president of the PA.

# EDITORIAL

## What makes the economy more troubled to progress?



### OPEN SKY

Dr Birupaksha Paul  
is professor of economics at the  
State University of New York at  
Cortland in the US. His recent book is  
'Sangkakaler Orthoriti.'

### BIRUPAKSHA PAUL

If there is any element of truth in the saying, "Morning shows the day," the interim government has failed to show a bright morning in terms of stabilising the economy. The two economic vices— inflation and unemployment—were at the root of the student-led mass uprising in July-August 2024, yet both reign supreme even after five months of the interim government's inception. And there is no certainty that the economic aspects won't deteriorate further, suggesting that the government should now think seriously about holding an inclusive election at its earliest capacity.

That was not the deal when the interim government took office on August 8 last year. Massive corruption and an authoritarian rule masquerading the façade of democracy contributed to the drastic ouster of the Awami League regime. In that backdrop, almost all political parties and the public demanded the sequencing of reforms first before holding an election. As time passed by, many, if not all, influential political parties are demanding the election first before delivering reform in the economy. The question of how far a non-elected government can go for time-consuming reforms within its limited capacity has become the talk of the town in recent days. And that very political landscape has made the economy more troubled than ever before.

The economy is not heading in the right direction because of two things: i) inherited mismanagement from the previous regime; and ii) conflicting priorities and intrinsic bumpiness of the interim government. The government seems to be engaged in unnecessary political debates by indulging untimely sociopolitical issues related to the constitution and history. This is unwarranted, particularly when the priority should be to curb inflation and to reduce unemployment.

Although the Bangladesh Bank governor expects the inflation rate to drop to around seven percent by June this year, the rising price of the US dollar doesn't lend credence to it. The indomitable practice of localised extortions and organised syndication

are sending the prices of necessary commodities beyond the reach of the extreme poor and lower-middle class that occupy a lion's share of the population.

A minimum level of macroeconomic stability will be hard to achieve if the interim government keeps its attention on political confusion, noneconomic diplomacy, racial discontent, and a huge vagueness about its own strategic intent. Simply a market-based exchange rate or interest rate doesn't create macro stability when the rulers have a nebulous roadmap

to follow. Printing Tk 22,500 crore to resuscitate the drowned banks seems necessary at the time, but it will fuel inflation despite the parallel mop-up attempts, which are inadequate.

As the Bangladesh Bank data on LC settlements suggest, imports of consumer goods fell by 13.4 percent during the July-November period of 2024 over its corresponding period of 2023, suggesting a further pressure on inflation due to the supply shortage. At the same time, a decline in imports for capital machinery by 21.9 percent will invariably hurt the country's productive capacity and

growth potential. A decrease in the imports of intermediate goods by 15.4 percent over the same period will dampen industrial production, which already suffers from labour unrest, layoffs, and sporadic closures.

These factors will largely contribute to the weakening of GDP that is expected to see four percent growth this fiscal year, as per the World Bank forecast. Bangladesh heads to an untimely stagflation, which has tormented many economies in the 1970s in the wake of the oil shocks. A Phillips curve, which exhibits a typical trade-off between unemployment and inflation, disappears during stagflation when both stagnancy and inflation force the toiling mass to walk through a tightrope. Stagflation makes the economy nosedive and induces youth frustration to erupt, the primary symptoms of which are looming. The student force seems to remain hugely unsettled in the education sector, damaging the quality of human

may fall again when the central bank switches back to capping the dollar price at Tk 123.

Remittances alone aren't enough to ensure a good growth in foreign exchange reserves. A fall in imports will impede growth in exports. Although forex reserves slightly edged up to around \$21.4 billion on the last day of 2024, its growth will be eroded if foreign direct investments (FDIs) don't pick up. FDIs in FY2024 declined by 8.8 percent, and the trend has even worsened during the interim regime. FDIs in the July-October period of FY2025 saw a collapse by 19.8 percent, suggesting that the foreign capitalists are not considering Bangladesh right now as a hotspot for investment. FDIs don't flow in unless domestic private investment shows an uptick, and here lies a problem with the interim government's capability for creating a credible business environment.

If the government is passionate about reforms, why did it deliver the contract of ground-handling of



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

the third terminal of Dhaka airport to a branded inefficient company, Biman, whose stories of corruption are rampant? Why would it keep the Financial Institutions Division (FID), which made default loans worse? Why would it jump into non-productive expenses for buying weapons from China and Pakistan right now? This decision can wait for an elected government. There are other priorities which the interim government has not only failed to address, but it has also confused the economy, which is facing terrible headwinds, with its poor managerial leadership.

## Now is the time to act on Rohingya crisis



Jubaida Auhana Faruque  
is pursuing master's in public and  
international affairs at the University of  
Pittsburgh in the US.

### JUBAIDA AUHANA FARUQUE

Despite hosting over a million Rohingyas for seven years, Bangladesh lacks a policy measure to manage and regulate these Myanmar nationals on its soil. With Myanmar descending into a civil war, the number of Rohingya refugees is increasing, adding to an already overwhelming crisis. According to a policy brief by the European Union, there are several agreements between Bangladesh and relevant parties to protect the rights of Rohingyas. However, the absence of national policy frameworks complicates managing their identification, movement, and protection, creating uncertainty for displaced populations and host communities.

Though several security issues are coming to the forefront with the recent change in government in Bangladesh, the Rohingyas have received little attention so far. Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus called for the expedited resettlement of Rohingya refugees to third countries, but no country or international organisations have shown much interest in proceeding with that. Under such circumstances, it's expected that the Rohingya will remain in the country a bit longer.

Bangladesh has earned a chance at a new start, which should include addressing the significant number

of people accommodated by one of its most important tourist cities. Due to the lack of an asylum policy, the government has little control over the movement and regulations of the refugees. The Rohingya people have been leaving camps to take up jobs in the host community without permits, replacing local labour and straining the economy. A local resident told *Prothom Alo*, "You need to pay a local labourer Tk 600 daily, but a Rohingya does the same job for Tk 200-300. Naturally, they get hired first." Though UNHCR assists with registration and identification, and security forces oversee their movement, the absence of a robust policy hampers effective coordination due to unclear guidelines. Adding to the economic strain are security concerns, with reports of Rohingyas getting involved in criminal activities.

A Rohingya leader told *Reuters*, "A series of murders of Rohingya men, including some leaders, at the camps have sparked fear and concern about militant groups gaining power and local authorities failing to curb increasing violence." These issues not only jeopardise the safety of host communities but also stigmatise the displaced population, making it harder to foster coexistence.

With Dr Yunus, a Nobel Peace laureate, leading the government,

a durable solution is expected to come to the discussion table. However, in last year's August, the foreign affairs ministry adviser declared that Bangladesh couldn't accept one more Rohingya, while Dr Yunus reaffirmed support without suggesting actionable policies. These mixed signals underscore that a clear asylum policy is essential to managing

**The government can form a reform commission to develop policies for all foreign nationals seeking or receiving asylum. The commission, headed by a refugee and migration specialist, should create a white paper to suggest the rights and restrictions for asylum seekers and receivers to the government and stakeholders.**

the crisis effectively and strengthening Bangladesh's role in addressing forced displacement globally.

Since Bangladesh is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, it doesn't identify the Rohingyas as "refugees" and prefers to label them as Forcefully Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs). While this designation may avoid legal obligations tied to the convention, it does little to resolve the realities of hosting these people indefinitely.

In this case, the government can form a reform commission to develop policies for all foreign nationals seeking

or receiving asylum. The commission, headed by a refugee and migration specialist, should create a white paper to suggest the rights and restrictions for asylum seekers and receivers to the government and stakeholders. This must include ensuring their safety and access to essential services while specifying restrictions on movement. It needs to determine the form and extent of retribution upon breaking domestic laws. Instead of modeling the policy on any other country's example, it should be tailored to Bangladesh's recent political transition. It should reflect the shift from an authoritarian government that neglected the crisis to a more accountable leadership based on change demanded by the public.

The policy should also be adaptable to future needs. Most importantly, it should advocate for and create pathways towards durable solutions. This policy framework should demonstrate that Bangladesh is temporarily hosting the Rohingyas and providing all kinds of accommodation and protection; nonetheless, there needs to be a long-term solution.

While repatriation might not be an immediate solution, ways to push for resettlement should be mentioned. Countries must increase their commitments to resettle Rohingyas and provide support for managing the crisis. Besides, if there are scopes for local integration, that should also be discussed.

Bangladesh has an opportunity to lead by example, showing that even non-signatories to the Refugee Convention can uphold the principles of humanity and responsibility. The current government must seize this moment to turn the rhetoric of support into actionable reforms.

# Tulip Siddiq's scandal and the politics of gratitude



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H.M. NAZMUL ALAM

If Netflix were to produce a political thriller titled *The Minister and Her Many Mansions*, it would likely trend globally within hours. Tulip Siddiq, UK's anti-corruption minister (yes, let's all savour that job title for a moment), has become the centre of a political scandal so rich in plot twists, property deeds, and geopolitical side characters that even *House of Cards* feels like an Ikea instruction manual in comparison.

Let's start with the flats. Pricey properties dotting London's posh neighbourhoods have been gifted or linked to Siddiq through a delightful labyrinth of "family gratitude," "political alliances," and good old-fashioned South Asian familial loyalty. Imagine Monopoly, but instead of "Go to Jail," the cards read: "Go to Parliamentary Ethics Committee. Do not pass. Go, do not collect public trust."

The King's Cross flat, worth a breezy 700,000 pounds, was reportedly a gift from Abdul Motalif, a property developer with ties to Bangladesh's former ruling party, the Awami League. The justification? Gratitude for the financial support given by Siddiq's parents during his "challenging time." Because, as we all know, the standard repayment for a good loan in South Asian families isn't a box of *mishti*, but prime London real estate.

And then there's the nuclear subplot. In 2013, Siddiq was photographed alongside Sheikh Hasina, her aunt and former Bangladesh prime minister, and Russian President Vladimir Putin at the signing ceremony of a \$12.65 billion nuclear power plant deal between Bangladesh and Russia. Critics suggest funds from this deal may have trickled into plush

London properties, and honestly, if this were a Marvel movie, that would be Siddiq's villain origin story.

But don't worry; her party leader, Sir Keir Starmer, insists he still has full confidence in her. Confidence, as defined in politics, is typically a temporary feeling that lasts right until the next front-page scandal. Meanwhile, Conservative MPs are

accused by Meta of running fake social media campaigns to suppress dissenting voices. Meta, the digital Godzilla, swooped in, shut down accounts, and delivered their report with the dramatic flair of a *Black Mirror* episode.

The media circus around Tulip Siddiq has reached its peak. Daily headlines dissect her financial

But let's face it: if this is market rate, then London's property market is a dystopian sci-fi economy.

But wait, there's more! Siddiq's mother, Sheikh Rehana, resides in a 1.4-million-pound home in Golders Green, reportedly owned by the son of a close ally and adviser to the former prime minister. The tangled financial web extends further when

remains in her post, steadfastly denying any wrongdoing. Her supporters insist the allegations are politically motivated, crafted by her aunt's enemies back in Bangladesh. In true South Asian fashion, family and politics remain an inseparable, melodramatic soap opera.

The Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) of Bangladesh is now investigating an alleged embezzlement of 3.9 billion pounds linked to the nuclear power plant project. The ACC's findings will undoubtedly either vindicate Siddiq or turn her into the anti-corruption minister who couldn't pass her own audit. But here's the kicker: the UK parliament's standards watchdog has already reprimanded Siddiq once for failing to declare rental income on one of her properties. The oversight was dismissed as an "inadvertent error," a phrase that politicians seem to have trademarked.

Her defenders argue that much of the scandal rests on guilt by association. But guilt by association becomes harder to dismiss when said associations involve property tycoons, political dynasties, and, oh yes, Vladimir Putin.

So what now? Will Tulip Siddiq weather the storm, or will this scandal become Labour's Achilles' heel in the next election cycle? The Conservatives are certainly banking on the latter, with key MPs already sharpening their rhetorical knives for future debates.

For now, we wait as Siddiq continues her starring role in the gripping saga of politics, property, and "gratitude." The lesson here? When it comes to political scandals, always follow the money—and, apparently, the Land Registry records.



VISUAL: MONOROM POLOK

**The King's Cross flat, worth a breezy 700,000 pounds, was reportedly a gift to Tulip from Abdul Motalif, a property developer with ties to Bangladesh's former ruling party, the Awami League. The justification? Gratitude for the financial support given by Siddiq's parents during his 'challenging time.'**

circling like sharks around Siddiq, demanding inquiries, audits, and perhaps an entire season of *Corruption: The Westminster Edition*.

The subplot also features Tulip's siblings, Azmina and Radwan, linked to a political think tank

disclosures, her living arrangements, and her curious pattern of inherited, gifted, or strategically rented homes. The latest in this drama says Siddiq now rents a 2.1-million-pound Finchley mansion owned by an Awami League affiliate. Naturally, she insists the rent is "market rate."

we consider that Siddiq also co-owns another flat worth 865,000 pounds with her husband.

What makes this entire affair ironic is Siddiq's role as the UK's anti-corruption minister. It's like casting Walter White as the head of the DEA. And yet, despite the uproar, Siddiq

## Why does the proclamation of July uprising matter?



Monira Sharmin  
is joint convener and executive  
member at Jatiya Nagork  
Committee.

MONIRA SHARMIN

document persuasively presented the philosophical foundations of their demands, which were based on the principles of equality, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The declaration gave the American Revolution broad support and moral legitimacy by outlining complaints and a vision for just governance.

Furthermore, proclamations

demand for self-determination. Though the uprising was suppressed, the proclamation became a symbol of resistance, fuelling the eventual realisation of an independent Ireland.

These are just a few examples of how these documents have influenced their respective revolutions and sparked innumerable fights for equality and justice around the world. Their capacity to turn ideas into deeds and inscribe the spirit of revolution into history is what gives them their enduring impact.

The proclamation of the July uprising, led by a courageous student movement that toppled a fascist regime at the cost of at least 1,500 lives, will be a profound declaration of justice, resilience, and rebirth. It will commemorate the martyrs who paid the ultimate price to liberate the nation from tyranny, while condemning the oppressive regime and its heinous actions under the

directive of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. This will articulate the revolutionary vision of a society founded on equity, accountability, and democratic values. It will reaffirm the power of collective action and the indomitable spirit of the youth, who stood against systemic oppression.

This proclamation, which will represent both a confrontation with the past and an optimistic leap towards a better, freer tomorrow, will mark a turning point in the history of the country. A critical turning point in the country's political trajectory came about when the interim government decided to endorse the July Proclamation a couple of weeks ago. The administration hopes to strengthen the legitimacy of the revolution and guarantee that the voices of those who gave their lives—especially the students and protesters—remain at the forefront of the story by incorporating active



FILE PHOTO: NAIMUR RAHMAN

**The July uprising became a manifestation of collective anger against decades of systemic neglect and a demand for transformative change.**

such a declaration transcends a mere announcement, serving instead as a foundational ideological pillar that validates the revolution's legitimacy. It weaves a unifying narrative, articulates collective grievances, envisions a future rooted in equity, and ignites the momentum required for transformative, collective action. By anchoring the uprising in principles of justice, solidarity, and resilience, the proclamation establishes moral and political legitimacy, compelling both adherents and adversaries to reckon with its transformative agenda. Moreover, as a historical document, it immortalises the spirit of the uprising, preserving its significance for posterity.

Throughout history, proclamation has been an essential tool in shaping revolutions and transformative movements. They outline the desires of the masses, capture the spirit of revolutionary intent, and offer a unified plan of action. A proclamation's capacity to express a distinct vision is the first of several reasons why it is vital. Clarity of purpose matters during times of upheaval when the status quo is questioned. A proclamation unites disparate voices behind a common cause, serving as a manifesto. Take the American colonies' Declaration of Independence (1776). In addition to reafirming the colonies' independence from British domination, this historic

serve to galvanise the masses. A well-crafted proclamation transcends mere words, striking a chord with the emotions and aspirations of the people. This dynamic is best shown by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789), which was first issued during the French Revolution. This proclamation reshaped the relationship between the state and the person and was based on the Enlightenment ideals of equality, liberty, and fraternity.

Proclamations are also important because they give revolutionary forces legitimacy. They are declarations of moral and legal authority as well as calls to action. One such example is Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (1863). It proclaimed the freedom of enslaved people in Confederate states, redefining the American Civil War as a fight for human liberty, even though it was essentially a wartime measure. The Union's cause gained international support and strengthened its moral standing by being in line with the universal principles of justice and freedom. Additionally, proclamations act as historical landmarks. They immortalise the inception of transformative moments, providing future generations with a lens through which to understand the aspirations and struggles of their forebears. The Proclamation of the Irish Republic (1916), read during the Easter Rising, underscored the Irish people's

participants in the declaration process. This joint endeavour will highlight the value of inclusivity in forming the nation's future administration and signify a shared dedication to the principles of justice, democracy, and human dignity.

Since the interim government binds itself with the goals and efforts of the revolutionaries, the proclamation can become both a formal declaration of change and an act of social reaffirmation. Through this approach, it can foster solidarity and show that the new political settlement will be based on widespread public engagement and accountability. The participation of those actively involved in the struggle guarantees that the proclamation can be a true manifestation of the desire of the people, rather than just a top-down announcement, confirming the fundamental nature of the revolution and safeguarding its course.

### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department  
Office of the Upazila Engineer  
Keshabpur, Jashore.  
www.lged.gov.bd

Reference No: 46.02.4138.000.14.001.2024.15

Date: 08.01.2025.

**e-Tender Notice No-02/2024-25 (LTM)**  
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works mention below under LGED, District : Jashore.

Sl. No	Tender ID No.	Package No. & Name of works	Tender Last Selling Date & Time	Tender Closing & Opening Date & Time
1	1058267	e-Tender/ADP/Kes/Tri/2024-25/W-01	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00
2	1058268	e-Tender/ADP/Kes/Sag/2024-25/W-02	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00
3	1058269	e-Tender/ADP/Kes/Moj/2024-25/W-03	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00
4	1058270	e-Tender/ADP/Kes/Bid/2024-25/W-04	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00
5	1058271	e-Tender/ADP/Kes/Mon/2024-25/W-05	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00
6	1058272	e-Tender/ADP/Kes/Kes/2024-25/W-06	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00
7	1058273	e-Tender/ADP/Kes/Paj/2024-25/W-07	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00
8	1058274	e-Tender/ADP/Kes/Su/2024-25/W-08	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00
9	1058275	e-Tender/ADP/Kes/Gou/2024-25/W-09	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00
10	1058276	e-Tender/ADP/Kes/Sat/2024-25/W-10	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00
11	1058277	e-Tender/ADP/Kes/Has/2024-25/W-11	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00
12	1060544	e-Tender/Raj/Kes/UPZ/2024-25/M-12	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00
13	1060545	e-Tender/Raj/Kes/UPZ/2024-25/M-13	26/01/2025, 17.00	27/01/2025, 15.00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's branches up to 17.00, Date: 26-January-2025.

Further information, Scheme details and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

[N.B-Details Notice Board]

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**The proclamation of the July uprising, led by a courageous student movement that toppled a fascist regime at the cost of at least 1,500 lives, will be a profound declaration of justice, resilience, and rebirth. It will commemorate the martyrs who paid the ultimate price to liberate the nation from tyranny.**

processes. Digital platforms played a crucial role in mobilising protests, spreading awareness, and uniting voices across the country. The July uprising became a manifestation of collective anger against decades of systemic neglect and a demand for transformative change, aiming to establish a more just, accountable, and sustainable governance framework in Bangladesh. This underscores why a proclamation for the July uprising is an imperative clarion call for our time.

In a time marked by systemic disparities and escalating discontent,



## Teams take it easy in chilly Sylhet

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

The temperature in Sylhet went down drastically in the last 48 hours, reaching as low as 15 degrees Celsius, forcing most of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) franchises to cancel training sessions yesterday.

Fortune Barishal, Sylhet Strikers and Rangpur Riders opted to stay warm in their respective hotels, choosing to rest as the Sylhet phase came to its first break. Dhaka Capitals, who are yet to win a match, had an optional practice session in which a few members of the squad, including an out-of-form Liton Das, were in attendance.

Durbar Rajshahi, Khulna Tigers and Chittagong Kings did make their way to the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium for scheduled practice sessions but decided to keep it limited to only drills and net sessions due to the chilly weather.

Rajshahi's in-form pacer Taskin Ahmed brought his eldest son

Tashfeen Ahmed to the ground and the father-son duo was seen spending some quality time with bat and ball on the field.

Meanwhile, journalists covering the tournament were more keen the outcome of the meeting between the national selectors and former Bangladesh skipper Tamim Iqbal at a hotel in Sylhet. They waited for hours in the hotel lobby and eventually was met by chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu who informed that Tamim's return would depend on him.

The BPL resumes today with another double header. In the day's opening contest, league-leaders Rangpur will take on second placed Barishal in a reverse fixture. In the first meeting, unbeaten Rangpur, who are unbeaten and have a five-match winning streak, thrashed Barishal by eight wickets in Dhaka. The second fixture of the day will see Dhaka square off against Chittagong to end their four match losing streak.



Durbar Rajshahi pacer Taskin Ahmed is seen walking into the Sylhet Outer Stadium with his son on Wednesday. While players of most of the Bangladesh Premier League teams spent the chilly day in Sylhet confined in their hotel rooms yesterday, Rajshahi had a practice session and will take on Khulna Tigers on Friday. The tournament's Sylhet phase, however, will resume today following a day's gap. In today's fixtures, defending champions Fortune Barishal take on Rangpur Riders in the day game before Chittagong Kings square off against Dhaka Capitals.

PHOTO: DURBAR RAJSHAH

## SOUMYA'S recovery to take more time

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh and Rangpur Riders opener Soumya Sarkar is yet to recover from the injury he sustained during Bangladesh's second T20I in West Indies last month. Soumya underwent running exercises at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday but while his stitches were removed following a dislocated finger joint, he would need some more time to finally play in the ongoing BPL.

"Three weeks have passed since Soumya's injury, and the stitches have been removed," BCB chief physician Debashish Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

"We initially projected a recovery period of four to six weeks, and that timeframe remains plausible. With three weeks already elapsed, we anticipate a clearer picture of his situation possibly in a week."

"Yes, there is some uncertainty. Typically, dislocations require four to six weeks to heal. Given that three weeks have already passed, we estimate an additional two to three weeks for full recovery," he added.

With the Champions Trophy knocking on the door, Soumya would now have to push to make full recovery and then gain fitness in time before the tournament.

## Indecisive BCB moving Tigers in circles

SPORTS REPORTER

Veteran opener Tamim Iqbal last donned the Bangladesh jersey in April 2023, stepping away before the ODI World Cup later that year. Since then, neither he nor Shakib Al Hasan has participated in the last two ODI series, both critical for shaping the Champions Trophy squad.

Despite earlier assurances of change following the 2023 World Cup in India, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) appears to be wavering yet again.

During the recent ODI series against Afghanistan and the West Indies, the BCB selectors did not indicate any communication with Tamim.

Now, with the Champions Trophy squad submission deadline looming on January 12, the decision to reintroduce a player to a national team plagued by batting consistency raises eyebrows.

"There is a vast difference between international cricket and domestic cricket. When a player reaches a certain age, they have to consider a lot of things. Tamim has not been in international cricket for a while, so it's a hurried situation if we think that in one meeting we can solve everything," chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu said yesterday after meeting with Tamim in Sylhet.

Tamim had previously outlined certain conditions for his return to the national team, though a BCB source clarified that these were not the focal point of yesterday's discussion.

**There is a vast difference between international cricket and domestic cricket. When a player reaches a certain age, they have to consider a lot of things. Tamim has not been in international cricket for a while, so it's a hurried situation if we think that in one meeting we can solve everything.**

BCB chief selector  
Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu

Thus, it boils down to the selectors' headache regarding the opening slot and batting troubles. Liton Das has not shown form, Soumya Sarkar will be returning after an injury and is yet to play in the Bangladesh Premier League, while

another opener, Tanzid Tamim, has not shown consistency. Also, the selectors have kept an eye on Parvez Hossain Emon during the West Indies T20Is and appear to be keeping their options open regarding opening slot selection matters.

The potential return of Tamim raises questions about the selectors' approach during the last two ODI series, where he was excluded. It reflects a cycle of testing alternatives, finding them inadequate, and ultimately resorting back into profiles with experience.

Shakib's situation, on the other hand, adds another layer of complexity. The chief selector confirmed that the board has yet to provide clear directives regarding the availability of Shakib, whose bowling suspension is also a factor.

On December 21 in Chennai, Shakib gave a fitness test but the results were delayed due to the holidays. Shahriar Nafees, in charge of cricket operations, informed The Daily Star: "We don't want to keep any suspense on the matter. The results were to arrive by January 5. Normally it takes 12 days, but there was the New Year and Christmas break, so we are expecting it anytime soon, and the ECB [English Cricket Board] will let us know."

It seems almost without a doubt that the board has no clear stance on either Tamim or Shakib. Since the 2023 World Cup discussions, Tamim's potential inclusion offers the only hint of change, but the board's indecision suggests they remain tethered to old patterns, leaving the Tigers' future in a state of uncertainty.

## Djokovic's another push for summit

REUTERS, Sydney

The blazing fire of the golden era of men's tennis has been reduced to dying embers without Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal but Novak Djokovic can send one last flame shooting into the Melbourne sky at this year's Australian Open.

Having ticked Olympic champion off his wishlist in Paris, Djokovic has the record for most Grand Slam singles titles in his sights and few would bet against him walking off Rod Laver Arena on Jan. 26 with the unprecedented 25th.

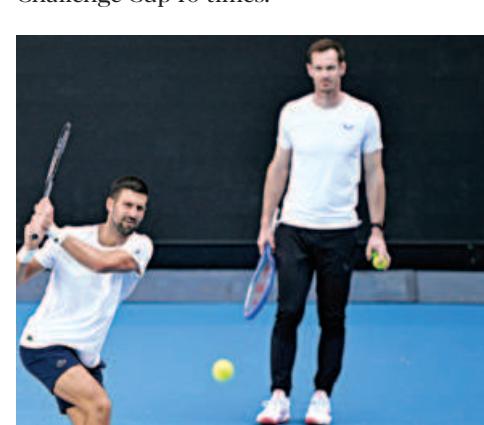
Yes, at 37, the body is no longer what it was, and yes, world number one Jannik Sinner won both of their contests last year, but the fierce drive that made Serbia's favourite son the most successful male player of all time endures.

"My main motivation comes from love and passion for the sport, and also the desire to keep competing," he said after losing to Sinner in the Shanghai Masters final in his last outing of 2024.

In 2024, Djokovic failed to win a Grand Slam for the first time since 2017 - his other loss to Sinner came in the Melbourne semis - but he proved he was still a sensational tennis player on his day when he beat Carlos Alcaraz to win Olympic gold.

There could be no place more appropriate

for Djokovic to finally break free of his tie with Margaret Court on 24 Grand Slam singles titles than in her own backyard at Melbourne Park, where he has won the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup 10 times.



Some quibble at the standard of some of the 11 Australian Opens that Court won, and others despite the 82-year-old for her politics, but a Grand Slam record is a Grand Slam record and Court shares it.

Djokovic, like Court, won his first major at the Australian Open and he can end the debate definitively on his 22nd visit to Melbourne as a professional.

Aside from the reliable band of supporters

from the local Serbian community, Djokovic has rarely been the most popular player at Melbourne Park but he has always been among the best.

From the dead-eyed competitor of his youth, through the self-styled "Djoker" of his 20s, to today's grand statesman of the game, Djokovic has played some incredible tennis on the famous blue courts.

Djokovic's trip Down Under was famously cut short by deportation from Australia during the height of the COVID pandemic in 2022, an incident which still triggers some nerves when he arrives at Melbourne airport.

This year, he arrived in Australia accompanied for the first time by his family and they were on hand as he was beaten in two sets by inspired American Reilly Opelka in the quarterfinals of the Brisbane International.

Warm-up tournament results have never been a reliable predictor of how Djokovic would perform at the main event, however.

His contemporary Andy Murray, who lost four Australian Open finals to Djokovic, signed up to his coaching team in the off-season and John McEnroe reckons the Scot will give Djokovic a shove should he need it as he approaches the summit.

"I think Murray will bring something to the table," the American great said of the unlikely

**In a rain-reduced 37-over-a-side second ODI, Rachin Ravindra (79) and Mark Chapman (62) smashed attacking half-centuries and stitched a 112-run second-wicket stand to power New Zealand to a commanding 255-9 against Sri Lanka at Seddon Park yesterday. Sri Lanka spinner Maheesh Theekshana claimed a late hat-trick, but his efforts went in vain as a poor batting display saw the visitors get bundled out for 142 in 30.2 overs, losing the game by 113 runs to concede the three-match series 2-0 to the Black Caps with a game in hand.**

PHOTO: AFP

## Arteta mocked for 'tricky' ball excuse

AFP, London

League Cup organisers have poked fun at Mikel Arteta after the Arsenal manager suggested the "tricky" match ball played a part in his side's defeat by Newcastle.

Eddie Howe's men took a major step towards the Wembley final in March with a 2-0 semifinal first-leg victory at the Emirates on Tuesday, with goals from Alexander Isak and Anthony Gordon.

Arsenal registered 23 shots in all, but only three on target, with both Gabriel Martinelli and Kai Havertz missing golden chances.

The ball used in the competition is made by Puma, while the one used in the Premier League is manufactured by Nike.

"We kicked a lot of balls over the bar," said Arteta. "It's tricky. This ball flies a lot. It's just very different to the Premier League ball and we have to adapt to that. It flies different, and the grip is very different as well."

Prior to the first leg of their last-four clash, Arsenal had scored 11 times in three matches in the League Cup this season.

The Carabao Cup (League Cup) X account, which has nearly 600,000 followers, reposted a clip of Arteta speaking about the ball during his post-match press conference and accompanied it with a meme of US rapper 50 Cent wearing an exasperated expression in an apparent dig at the Arsenal manager's comments.

The winner of the tie will face either Tottenham or Liverpool at Wembley.



## June's SAFF C'ship to feature new format

SPORTS REPORTER

The 15th edition of the SAFF Championship is set to commence on June 15, with the South Asian Football Federation's (SAFF) executive committee approving a new home-and-away format yesterday, replacing the previous centralised venue structure.

"The meeting decided to hold the SAFF Championship in a new format, on a home and-away basis, and it will take nearly 30 to 35 days," SAFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal told The Daily Star over the phone after yesterday's board meeting in Kathmandu.

Under the new format, each of the seven participating nations will play three home and three away games. However, the India-Pakistan matches will be held at a neutral venue.

The meeting also approved two new tournaments for this year: the SAFF U-23 Championship and the SAFF Women's Club Cup Championship. The latter, set to run from November 6-19, will feature eight teams.

However, given that not all countries have women's clubs, FIFA rankings will determine the number of teams from each nation.

Moreover, the SAFF is on the verge of signing a deal with Sports 5 to hold the SAFF Men's Club Championship in 2026. The tournament will involve eight teams, playing home-and-away matches, with the top ranked team having two representatives.





## Grameen Bank ownership, board to see major changes

- Govt to cut its stakes from 25% to 5%
- Borrowers to hold 95% stakes
- Govt-appointed directors reduced from 3 to 1
- Directors from borrower-shareholders to rise from 9 to 11
- Chairman to be elected by board, not govt
- Resignation of directors, MD to be approved by board

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Grameen Bank is set to get a fresh lease of life as the government plans to reduce its stake to 5 percent from the existing 25 percent.

Earlier in 2013, the parliament passed the Grameen Bank Act, 2013 to tighten the government's grip on the Nobel Peace Prize-winning organisation without increasing its ownership stakes.

Now, the government has taken a step to roll back many of the changes made in the Grameen Bank Act, 2013 by way of an ordinance, whose draft has been uploaded on the website of the Financial Institutions Division.

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## Israeli strikes kill 27 across Gaza

Women, children among dead; mediators step up efforts to seal ceasefire deal

REUTERS, Cairo

Israeli military strikes across Gaza killed at least 27 people yesterday, Palestinian medics said, as international mediators stepped up efforts to seal a ceasefire and hostage exchange deal between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas.

An airstrike killed at least 10 people in a multi-storey house in the Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood of Gaza City, while another killed five in the nearby Zeitoun suburb, medics said.

In Deir Al-Balah city in central Gaza, where hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians are sheltering, and in Jabalia, the largest of Gaza's eight historic refugee camps, a total of seven people were killed, they said.

Israel's military said it struck Hamas members operating in a school in Jabalia, and that it took steps to minimise risk to civilians.

Later yesterday, an Israeli airstrike killed five Palestinians inside the public garden in Gaza City, medics said.

Such mass casualties are a daily occurrence in Gaza, where at least 45,936 Palestinians have now been killed in Israel's 15-month-long assault against Hamas, according to health officials in the enclave.

- Hamas, Israel accuse each other of blocking deal
- Trump criticised by Hamas for statements on hostage situation
- Death toll in Gaza rises to 45,936

## TK 1,114CR EMBEZZLEMENT ACC sues two sons of S Alam, 52 others

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has lodged a case against 54 individuals, including Ahsanul Alam and Ashraful Alam, sons of S Alam Group Chairman Mohammad Saiful Alam, over allegations of misappropriating about Tk 1.114 crore from Islami Bank's Jubilee Road branch in Chattogram.

S Alam Group owned as much as 82 percent stakes in Islami Bank, documents show, but the conglomerate maintained that it had 32 percent stakes.

Among those sued are Golam Kibria Chowdhury, owner of M/s United Super Traders; Mohammed Monirul Moula, former managing director of the bank; Qaiser Ali and KQMH Habibullah, former additional MDs; Sohel Aman and Shahadat Hossain, former managers of the Jubilee Road branch. The rest are bank officials.

According to the case statement, the embezzlement was orchestrated by Ahsanul and Ashraful by showing his relatives and employees as owners of different companies in the last three years.

Key accused Golam Kibria was shown as a supplier. He and the owners of other companies, in collusion with top bank officials, embezzled the money, said the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

## 'What can we do?'

Says Touhid on 'Hasina's visa extension by India'

### DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain yesterday said he has come to know about the reported visa extension of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who is staying in India since her ouster on August 5 last year, through media.

"Like you, I also got to know it from newspapers. What can we do?" he said when journalists asked him about the reported visa extension of Hasina at the foreign ministry.

Quoting sources in New Delhi, the Hindustan Times yesterday reported that New Delhi extended Sheikh Hasina's visa.

According to the report, the Union home ministry was required to sign off on the visa extension through the local Foreigners Regional Registration Office. Authorities, however, dismissed claims that the former leader had been granted 'asylum' in the country.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



Even amid the harsh winter, teachers and students of Madhabkati-Bilpatala Government Primary School are showing up to the waterlogged classrooms to ensure the children's education is not hampered. Many parts of the No-2 Raghunathpur union in Khulna's Dumuria upazila, where the school is situated, has been partially inundated for around six months now. As the drainage system in the area remains faulty, the school authorities have been trying to remove the water from the school themselves. Inset, children wading through ankle-deep water to get to their classrooms.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Trudeau rejects Trump threat to annex Canada

France, Germany slam his military action plan 'to secure' Greenland, Panama Canal

AFP, Ottawa

There is not a "snowball's chance in hell" that Canada will merge with the United States, outgoing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Tuesday, while his foreign minister added the country will "never back down" from threats by Donald Trump.

The comments from Trudeau and Foreign Minister Melanie Joly followed the US President-elect's statement at a news conference about using "economic force" in pursuit of his unlikely plan for Canada to merge with the United States.

"There isn't a snowball's chance in hell that Canada would become part of the United States," Trudeau reacted on X, while also highlighting close bilateral security and trade ties.

Joly, meanwhile, accused Trump of showing with his remarks "a complete lack of understanding" of Canada.

"Our economy is strong. Our people are strong. We will never back down in the face of threats," she said on the social media platform owned by Trump ally Elon Musk.

Trump spoke in a meandering press conference Tuesday, a day after Congress certified his election victory. He also threatened military action to secure the Panama Canal, and Greenland.

Youth shot dead 'by BSF' at Sunamganj border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A youth was reportedly shot dead by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at the Bangladesh-India border in Bishwambharpur upazila of Sunamganj yesterday.

Saidul Islam, 23, was killed near the Machimpur border, said Lt Col AKM Zakaria Kadir, commanding officer of the Sunamganj Battalion of Border Guard Bangladesh.

Preliminary reports suggest that the youth was shot by the BSF, he said.

He said a flag meeting with the BSF is scheduled for 11:00am today, where they expect official confirmation in this regard.

According to locals, Saidul and several others had entered Indian territory to smuggle betel nuts when the shooting occurred. His accomplices took him to Bishwambharpur Health Complex and then to Sunamganj District Hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead.

## Shakib fails bowling test again

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has failed his second test for suspect bowling action, confirmed The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) sources to The Daily Star in the wee hours of Thursday.

Shakib's bowling action was reported by the on-field umpires during his stint with Surrey County Cricket Club in September last year.

The all-rounder had failed his first test at the Loughborough University in England and gave his second test in India's Chennai on December 21, 2024. At midnight on Thursday, ECB sources confirmed to The Daily Star that Shakib 'failed the test' again.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) was awaiting Shakib's results to see if they could include the all-rounder in the squad for the upcoming Champions Trophy, beginning next month. The deadline for squad



SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



People pull out bodies from the rubble of a building destroyed in an Israeli strike on the Bureij camp for Palestinian refugees in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP