

## 250-bhori gold stolen from mall in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Sylhet

Gold ornaments worth Tk 3.5 crore were stolen between Wednesday evening and yesterday morning from a jewellery shop at a Sylhet shopping mall.

Nurani Jewellery is on the third floor of Al Hamra Shopping City in Sylhet city's Chowhatta area. Its proprietor Md Javed Chowdhury said when he came in the morning to open the store, he saw a new lock in the shutter.

He then broke the lock to get in and found that around 250 bhoori of gold jewellery had been stolen from the store along with the storage box containing CCTV camera.

Md Mohosin, security in-charge of the mall, said, "The entire shopping mall was locked down and there was no trace of anyone entering or exiting the mall. However, we are checking all CCTV footage

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A goods-laden pickup crosses a rickety bailey bridge over the Turag river beneath a flyover in Tongi, Gazipur. Although the bridge is designed only for lighter vehicles, it is frequently used by the heavy ones. This practice led to the collapse of a nearby bailey bridge last week, yet drivers continue to use this one amid risk. The photo was taken at Abdullahpur recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## ZIA ORPHANAGE TRUST

## No money was embezzled

## ACC lawyer tells apex court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission's lawyer Md Ashif Hassan yesterday told the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court that no money of the Zia Orphanage Trust has been embezzled.

Relevant funds of the trust have been moved but the money was deposited in bank accounts, he said.

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

The apex court fixed January 14 for resuming the hearing. Earlier in the day, Khaleda's lawyers placed arguments before the same court, saying that the prosecution could not produce any document signed by Khaleda regarding formation of the Trust.

The prosecution couldn't even show where the money came from, they said, adding that the money of the trust has been kept in the bank accounts and the amount has increased much more.

The lawyers said the relevant provisions of the constitution and the law were not followed in the trial of this case, as Khaleda and others have been convicted in this politically motivated case.

## Jamaat could've apologised, but they're justifying it

## Says BNP leader Maj Hafiz on its role in 1971

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP standing committee member Maj (ret'd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed yesterday said they had thought an opportunity had arisen for Jamaat-e-Islami to apologise to the people for their role in 1971, instead, the party is justifying its role in 1971.

"Today, a certain group is attempting to place the concept of a mass uprising above the struggle for freedom. We cannot compare anything with the Liberation War. It will always remain supreme. We will not allow anyone to tarnish the struggle for freedom," he said.

He made these remarks at a rally titled "The Liberation War of '71 is the greatest pride of the nation", organised by the Bangladesh Nationalist Freedom Fighters' Party at Jatiya Press Club.

"Some days ago, a statement caught our attention. It was said by Jamaat-e-Islami that in this country, only the military [army] and Jamaat-e-Islami are patriots. This statement has hurt us. The Bangladesh Army fought in the Liberation War; it was a force built through the Liberation War.

"It was formed under the leadership of Maj Ziaur Rahman with soldiers and officers from the then East Bengal Regiment and EPR, and they fought the war to gain independence for the country. The army doesn't need a certificate from anyone to prove they are patriots. Their role in 1971 and beyond proves they have always stood by the people and will continue to do so in the future. But I am shocked by Jamaat's statement," he said.

"We have always regarded them [Jamaat] as allies. When the fascist forces tortured and persecuted them, we expressed solidarity. When their party was dissolved, we gave them a chance to participate in elections under the 'Sheaf of Paddy' symbol. Khaleda Zia gave them a place in her cabinet." He added that many of his party leaders did not like this decision, but they accepted it for the sake of party discipline.

"Was this statement from them appropriate in return? We do not expect such statements from them. The strong unity that has been formed among political parties today could be fractured by this. They need to be more careful about this in the future," he said.

## When students become guinea pigs

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Let us begin with a generic scenario to explain the quandary of a 10th grader in Bangladesh in 2025. Due to take the SSC examinations in a year, this student will have to choose between science, humanities and commerce streams.

The same student in 2024 had a generalised education without having to choose from any stream and instead

preparation. Students are caught in the middle, forced to adapt to frequent, poorly implemented changes.

The National Curriculum 2022 aimed to modernise education with a unified system for grades 1 through 10, moving away from rigid streams and traditional exams. The government claimed this shift would help transition students from rote learning to a more practical, real-world education. It



of year-end finals, was graded on the basis of continuous assessments under the 2022 curriculum. A year earlier, in 8th grade, the same student was made to follow the long-standing 2012 curriculum, which used traditional exams and mandated stream selection.

This rapid succession of reforms reveals a core problem: education has become an elaborate experiment, lacking long-term vision or adequate

removed traditional year-end exams, replacing them with continuous assessments and a greater emphasis on practical activities.

While the curriculum initially seemed promising, its implementation was flawed. Even months after the start of the academic year in 2024, the assessment system remained unclear. The situation was clear — teachers were unprepared, parents were

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## People suffer hours of gridlock amid protests

## Dismissed BDR personnel block Shahbagh while madrasa students protest makeshift courtroom on its premises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

City dwellers endured hours of traffic gridlock yesterday as dismissed BDR (now BGB) personnel and their families blocked the Shahbagh intersection, while students of Government Madrasah-E-Alia staged a protest in Bakshibazar.

The dismissed BDR members began their protest in the morning at the Central Shaheed Minar, demanding justice for the 2009 Pilkhana massacre victims, reinstatement of dismissed personnel [who are innocent], and the release of those they claim were wrongly imprisoned.

Around 1:30pm, they marched to Shahbagh, blocking the intersection for two and a half hours before returning to the Shaheed Minar.

Meanwhile, Alia Madrasa students in Bakshibazar protested the presence of a makeshift courtroom on their premises, calling for its relocation, citing disruption to their academic activities.

**SHAHBAGH PROTEST** Hundreds of dismissed members of the paramilitary force and their families gathered at the Shaheed Minar yesterday morning, where protests had been ongoing since Wednesday.

Anwar Hossain, a dismissed

BDR personnel, said, "We want justice for the innocent, both the victims of the massacre and those dismissed unfairly. We are demanding the unconditional release of those who were not involved in the killings, rather than arrested based on suspicion."

He also demanded job reinstatement and proper

3:30pm and announced their next course of action.

Mahin Sarker, a coordinator of the Students Against Discrimination platform, who joined the protesters, said they would hold mass contact programmes in their respective areas on Friday and Saturday.

On Sunday, they plan to organise human chains in



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

compensation.

Monira Parveen, the wife of a detained BDR man, said, "My husband has already spent 16 years in jail in a case filed under the Explosives Act. The case is still ongoing. How long will he stay in jail? We want his release now."

The protesters returned to the Shaheed Minar around

front of district press clubs.

He said before the next hearing, they would return to Dhaka and resume their protest in the capital.

## FIRE AT ALIA MADRASA COURTROOM

In Bakshibazar, students of Government Madrasa E-Alia gathered early in the day to

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## US EMBASSY

## Tracey Jacobson to join as new Chargé d'Affaires

DIPLMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Tracey Ann Jacobson, a career member of the senior foreign service in the US, will join US embassy in Dhaka as Chargé d'affaires (CDA), ad interim, on January 11.



She has served as US ambassador three times — to Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kosovo. Most recently, Jacobson served as a senior adviser in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

After US Ambassador Peter Haas left Bangladesh after three years of stay in July last year, Helen LaFavre, deputy head of the US mission, was the CDA of the US embassy Dhaka. She then also left Dhaka late last year.

Currently, the CDA of the US embassy is Megan Bouldin, who assumed duties as the deputy chief of mission in August 2024. Bouldin will be replaced by Jacobson.

US President Joe Biden in May last year had nominated diplomat David Slayton Meale as the new US ambassador to Bangladesh. However, his name has been sent to the Senate and approval is needed before the appointment.

## In grip of bitter cold

## Mild cold wave sweeps parts of country, winds intensify difficulties

STAR REPORT

A mild cold wave is currently sweeping across the districts of Rajshahi, Pabna, Naogaon, Panchagarh, and Chuadanga and is expected to spread further, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

The country recorded its lowest temperature of 9.1 degrees Celsius in Naogaon's Badalgachhi yesterday.

The mild cold wave has slowed daily life in the northern districts, as the chilly winds from the Himalayas continue to sweep over the area. Despite the harsh weather, clear skies brought some relief yesterday, as bright sunshine made outdoor conditions slightly more bearable.

In Tentulia, the northernmost point of the country, the lowest temperature was recorded at 9.5 degrees Celsius in the morning,



with a wind speed of 8.9 kilometres per hour, said Jitendra Nath, assistant officer at the Tentulia Weather Observatory Centre.

Nomita Bala, 40, who works in a corn field in Yakubpur village in Thakurgaon, described the difficulty of continuing work amidst the icy wind.

"It is tough to continue work

in the crop field as the wind is flowing from the northern side constantly," she said. Rickshaw-van puller Amirul from Farabari shared similar experiences, saying, "My daily income dropped as I am working half of the day due to the adverse weather."

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) has urged farmers to follow its directives to protect their crops during the cold wave.

Additionally, the cold wave has

led to a significant rise in cold-related illnesses.

Rakibul Alam, resident medical officer at the 250-bed Thakurgaon Modern Hospital, confirmed an increased influx of patients suffering from respiratory and other cold-induced ailments.

District administrations in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh have begun distributing warm clothing to cold-affected individuals.

Top officials in the districts have also urged affluent residents to assist the cold-stricken population alongside government efforts.

In Dhaka, the minimum temperature in the morning was 14.5 degrees Celsius, with the maximum temperature recorded at 21 degrees Celsius.

Bangladesh Meteorological Department forecasts dry weather with a temporarily partly cloudy sky during the 24-hour period. Moderate to dense fog is also likely to occur in various parts of the country, particularly from midnight to morning.

## Ensuring justice, accountability key to national unity

## 2 int'l jurists tell event

DIPLMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Reconciliation and national unity cannot be achieved without ensuring justice and accountability. Ensuring justice in a corrupt political system, however, is very challenging but not impossible.

The statement was made by two internationally acclaimed jurists during an event at the Supreme Court Bar Association Auditorium in the capital yesterday.

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies organised the event, titled "Truth, Justice, Accountability and Reparations for Crimes against Humanity: Comparative Experiences from Africa and Latin America".

BLAST Honorary Executive Director Sara Hossain said Bangladesh is going through a critical time when ensuring justice and reconciliation is very important.

Yasmin Sooka, chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, said every human being has the right to justice and reparation, but the problem starts when politicians of a country capture the institutions through corrupt practices. Even, the judiciary

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