



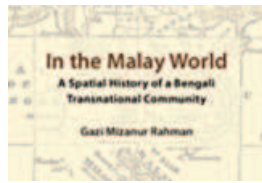
38pc harassed,
31pc paid bribes
while seeking
police services
P3



Raising VAT and
shrinking social
protection are
unwise moves
P8



The plastic
paradox
P9



Untold history of
Bengali migrants
in Malaya,
Singapore
P10

India's fencing along border 'unauthorised'

Such activities will hurt bilateral
ties, says foreign secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has told New Delhi that the construction of barbed wire fences by the Indian Border Security Force along the Bangladesh-India border "without proper authorisation" undermines the spirit of cooperation and friendly relations between the two nations.

Foreign Secretary Md Jashim Uddin has made this communication to Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma, who was summoned to the foreign ministry yesterday amid tensions touched off by the recent BSF activities along the border.

"Such activities, particularly the unauthorised attempts to construct barbed wire fencing and the related operational actions by BSF, have caused tensions and disturbances along the border," Jashim Uddin said in a media statement yesterday.

Also, Dhaka will push for the cancellation of any "unequal agreements" related to Bangladesh-India borders at a director general-level meeting of the border forces of the two countries scheduled for February.

Speaking at a press conference at the Secretariat yesterday, Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (retired) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said that due to the BSF's recent fencing activities, tensions arose in five border areas, including Chapainawabganj, Naogaon, Lalmonirhat, and the Tin Bigha Corridor.



After a break during the July-August movement, the construction of the Dhaka-Ashulia Expressway, the second such expressway centring the capital, is now going on in full swing and saw almost 50 percent progress till December last year. Once completed, this 24km expressway – stretching from Dhaka airport to Dhaka EPZ – will be connected to the partially-opened Dhaka Elevated Expressway. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



Next polls to
be 'best ever
and historic':
Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday said the government is planning to make the upcoming general election of Bangladesh "the best ever and historic."

"We want to make it an example, a historical example," Yunus said during a meeting with Norwegian Ambassador to Bangladesh Håkon Arald Gulbrandsen.

Yunus also encouraged Norway to use Bangladesh as a regional distribution hub for their products

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Home Adviser Jahangir Alam
accused the previous Awami
League government of granting
India "unequal opportunities"
through MoUs.

"Thanks to the strong position of the BGB and locals, India has been forced to halt its activities. I extend my gratitude to them for their role in this matter."

He added that various issues have risen along the border due to some "unequal agreements" signed during the previous government's tenure.

Jahangir Alam said four border-related Memorandums of Understanding have been signed between the two countries since Bangladesh's independence.

Asked at a separate press briefing in the foreign service academy, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said those four agreements are the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement for the disposal of enclaves and disputed lands; the Joint Indo-Bangladesh Guidelines for Border Authorities 1975; the Land Boundary Agreement Protocol 2011; and the Coordinated Border Management Plan 2011.

The home adviser said that, of those agreements, the 1975 MoU specifies that no defence development activities can take place within 150 yards of the zero line.

"Another MoU states that any development activities cannot occur within the 150 yards of the zero line without mutual consent. Any such work will require prior agreement between the two nations."

He said India has already fenced 3,271km of the 4,156km-long border with Bangladesh, leaving approximately 885km unfenced.

Jahangir Alam accused the previous Awami League government, which was in power between 2009 and 2024, of granting India unequal opportunities through MoUs,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

ATTACK ON TRADERS Emon among 10 sued for attempted murder

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and
MUNTAKIM SAAD

Friday's attack on two computer traders in the capital's Elephant Road took place as they refused to pay extortion money to the gang of top criminal Sanjidul Haque Emon, says the case statement.

However, sources said the attack might be linked to a power struggle between two top criminals – Emon from Hazaribagh and Imamul Hasan Helal, alias Pichchi Helal, from Mohammadpur – who are allegedly attempting to dominate the Multiplan Centre traders on Elephant Road.

The two were released on bail after the August 5 political changeover.

Two computer shop owners – Wahedul Hasan Dipu, president of Elephant Road Computer

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Top criminals on extortion spree

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and
MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

In November last year, a contractor secured the work to demolish a building in Dhaka's Moghbazar for Tk 16.5 lakh. Shortly afterwards, members of a local gang arrived at the site and demanded Tk 3 lakh to allow the work to proceed.

"We have been handling construction projects in Dhaka for over a decade. While we are no stranger to extortion, the situation has worsened over the last few months as unprecedentedly high amounts are being demanded in the name of top criminals," the contractor told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

"We even had to abandon a project in Bhashantek due to a similar extortion threat," he added.

The contractor initially paid Tk 100,000 to two gangs to resume the work in Moghbazar.

Sources claimed that one of the gangs operates under Zeesan Ahmed, a top criminal reportedly residing in a Middle Eastern country now. This

newspaper could not independently verify the claim.

A close associate of Subrata Bain, the leader of the other gang, however, denied his involvement in the incident.

Speaking to The Daily Star anonymously, he said, "Dada [Subrata] is not involved in any extortion activities. Other gangs are using his name."

Mohammad Razu, officer-in-charge of Hatirjheel Police Station, said they did not receive any information about Subrata's involvement in extortion. "If evidence emerges, we will take necessary legal action," he said.

Subrata's whereabouts are unknown, but people who knew him said he was sighted in Bangladesh after a long time recently.

With a good number of similar incidents reported in recent months, a climate of fear permeates businesses in Dhaka. Contractors in the construction sector are being forced to pay or stop work under threat, while businesspeople in other sectors are targeted with abduction or attacks.

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VAT hike to improve tax- GDP ratio Says CA press secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has been compelled to raise VAT on some commonly consumed products to improve revenue collection and stabilise the country's economy.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam made the statement at a press briefing at the Foreign Services Academy yesterday.

He said capital flight and erratic development expenditure by the previous government have left the economy in a fragile state.

"We need macro-economic stability, and a good tax-to-GDP ratio is an indicator of that. However, our tax-to-GDP ratio is among the lowest in the world. In the last five months, we have had a significant shortfall in revenue collection.

"We had a revenue collection target of Tk 1,69,000 crore [in the last five months], but we

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Halima, who lives near the Khulna Railway Station, woke up to see these two puppies shivering amid the heavy winter fog yesterday morning. She made sure to get some warm clothes to cover them up while they sleep. The dogs are not at risk as this particular rail track has been nonoperational for long.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

'ILLEGAL PLOT ALLOCATION' ACC sues Hasina, her daughter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her daughter, Saima Wazed (Putul), have been sued for irregularities in the allocation of plots under the Purbachal New Town project.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case with its Dhaka Integrated District Office, ACC Director General Akhtar Hossain told reporters yesterday.

According to the case statement, Saima Wazed, the prime accused, concealed information about ownership of housing or apartments by her and her family members within the jurisdiction of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) and abused Hasina's (second accused) authority as a public servant by influencing and colluding with 14 public officials involved in the allocation process to secure Plot-017 on Road 203 in Sector-27 of the Purbachal project despite her ineligibility.

This action violated laws and policies governing the allocation of plots in the Purbachal New Town Project.

ACC DG Akhtar said, "The charges have been filed under sections 161, 163, 164, 409, and 109 of The Penal Code, 1860, along with section 5(2) of The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947."

Fourteen other individuals have also been named as accused in the case. They are: Saiful Islam Sarkar, administrative officer, Purabi Goldar, senior assistant secretary, Kazi Wazi Uddin, additional secretary (administration), and Shahid Ullah Khandaker, secretary

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First HMPV case of the year reported

DGHS issues guideline

SYMPTOMS	COUGH	WHEEZING
	FEVER	SHORTNESS OF BREATH (DYSPNEA)
	RUNNY OR STUFFY NOSE	
	SORE THROAT	RASH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 30-year-old woman has been found infected with the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV), the first case of the disease in Bangladesh this year, according to health officials.

Halimur Rashid, line director of Communicable Disease Control Programme of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said the woman from Kishoreganj also tested positive for Klebsiella Pneumoniae, a variant of pneumonia.

"The condition of the woman deteriorated due to pneumonia, not HMPV," said Halimur, adding that the patient is currently under treatment at Infectious Diseases Hospital, Mohakhali.

First identified in the Netherlands in 2001, HMPV spreads through direct contact between people, or when someone touches a contaminated surface.

HMPV is transmitted through respiratory droplets, direct contact with infected individuals, or contaminated surfaces. Infections are most common during late

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VISUALLY BIMURTO

an exhibition of contrasts, connections

REHNUMA SHAHREEN

"It's a wonderful experience to see the works of two artists from different mediums in the same exhibition -- works that seem to express their inner thoughts in two different ways, yet woven together by a single thread," these words from a visitor, Nuzhat Jahan, perfectly encapsulates the exhibition Visually BIMURTO by Habibur Rahman and Shamsad Rahman.

Held at Gallery Chitruk in Dhanmondi, Dhaka, this exhibition (running till January 15) marks the first collaborative showcase of the Rahmans in Bangladesh.

There is an immediate sense of immersion for those visiting the gallery, a quiet pull into the layered and shared space the Rahmans have constructed.



Here, the tangible and the abstract converged, forming a narrative that is as much about space as it is about the emotion and distinct identity of the artists.

Habibur Rahman's work carries



PHOTO: COURTESY

the imprint of his architectural training, transformed into complex compositions that challenge perceptions of depth and dimension through mediums as simple as graphite or colour pencils on paper. And, in contrast, Shamsad Rahman's works on silk imbued in vibrant colour, echoes the textures and patterns of nature, with a warm celebration of femininity.

Curator Efat Razowana Reya shed light on the artists' journey and her experience of curating for this exhibition. She mentioned, "In my year plus journey working with the artists, I noticed a palpable synergy between them, which reflects their shared foundation in architecture, while allowing their distinct voices to

shine through, and it resulted in a duo exhibition like this."

"You can notice here; I have placed the work of Shamsad at the centre space of this exhibition hall, and the works of Habibur surrounding them throughout the rest. It actually reflects their lives and journeys as artists. They practiced art together wherever they went."

Habibur Rahman's art is bold and directly communicative with the viewer, often catching them off guard as if struck by a bolt from the blue upon entering the exhibition space. His use of simple mediums like graphite, charcoal, or ink on paper, with a basic flow of lines and shapes, feels surprisingly profound because of his

ability to communicate so much.

One intriguing feature about most of his works exhibited was that each piece employs a distinct type of lines, shape, or style which either glide naturally across the canvas, filling the spaces with effortless flow, or are placed in a way throughout the canvas that clearly reflects his mastery on architectural drawing and his profound understanding of space, form and composition.

On the other hand, Shamsad Rahman's works reflect the elegance of femininity through her silk painting skills, enhanced by her technical expertise and deep understanding of the natural world.

Silk, as a medium, has its own agenda, hence it demands a collaborative effort to paint on silk. The dye flows and bleeds in its natural course, creating an aesthetic that feels organic yet intentional. Rahman's love for silk developed during her stay in the Middle East, where she was captivated by the vibrant nature of the Moghul and Persian artworks. Her works on silk distinctively feature the use of photographs and microelements from nature through skillful painting and photo manipulation techniques.

This exhibition is a milestone not only for the Rahmans, but also for the local art enthusiasts. By bringing their collaborative vision to Dhaka, this exhibition offers a fresh lens, through which to view the confluence of visions shaped by architectural precision and the boundless creativity of visual elements.

BNP won't form govt alone: Khasru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP will not form a unilateral government even if the party wins 200 seats in the next parliamentary election, said BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday.

"The 31 point proposal was formulated collectively by 42 parties, including the BNP. Even if the BNP wins 200 seats, it will not form a government alone, as implementing the 31 points must be achieved through a national government," he said.

He made these remarks while addressing a discussion as chief guest on the 31-point state reform proposal held in the capital's Banani.

Khasru said the BNP and 42 other parties jointly carried out the movement that toppled the Awami League-led government.

The BNP leader acknowledged that students played the biggest role in the movement. However, the contributions of other stakeholders should not be underestimated, he added.

He warned against divisions over taking credit for the movement and urged everyone to remain united to secure people's rights in the future.

The BNP leader said, "We have been working to fix the state structures for several years. Bangladesh will not become a communal country."

"Ziaur Rahman emphasised merit-based politics, and the BNP continues to follow that path. However, the participation of the youth [in politics] will be the most critical aspect of Bangladesh's future," he said.

Around 250 students from private universities across Dhaka and other parts of the country attended the discussion.

DHANMONDI GOLD HEIST 3 arrested, 50 tola gold recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested three individuals for their alleged involvement in a heist at a jewellery shop in Dhanmondi's Shimanto Sambhar Shopping Complex.

Md Rubel, 28, Shafik alias Sohel, 35, and Saddam Hossain, 31, were arrested in drives conducted in Cumilla's Companyganj and Muradnagar areas between January 9 and January 11.

Gold ornaments weighing around 50 tola were also recovered from their possession, said Mohammad Nasirul Islam, DMP's joint police commissioner (DB South), at a press briefing held at the DMP Media Centre yesterday.

On January 3, a gang of criminals looted the shop, Crown Diamond and Jewellers, on the ground floor of the shopping complex.

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India's fencing along border 'unauthorised'

FROM PAGE 1

which have now led to the disputes over barbed wire fencing at 160 locations.

He stressed that these challenges stemmed from written permissions granted by the previous government. "These permissions should not have been issued."

He also said, "A major problem arises from the written assurances that allowed India to carry out certain activities. One of the significant issues pertains to the Tin Bigha Corridor."

Under the 1974 agreement, he said, Bangladesh handed over Berubari to India after parliamentary ratification. In return, India was supposed to provide Bangladesh with access to the Tin Bigha Corridor, but it failed to fulfil this

commitment.

"They would open the corridor for an hour and then close it for another hour. Later, in 2010, a new agreement was signed to keep the corridor open for 24 hours. However, this [2010] agreement also allowed India to construct a border fence on the zero line at Angarpota.

"Now we face challenges in opposing this construction as Bangladesh signed this agreement."

At the meeting with Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma, Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin expressed serious concerns over BSF's recent activities along the border.

He called upon the Indian government to advise all authorities concerned there to refrain from any provocative activities that could

stoke tensions along the shared border.

He hoped the matter would be discussed at length in the upcoming BGB-BSF DG-level talks.

After the meeting, Pranay Verma told journalists they discussed New Delhi's commitment to ensuring a crime-free border, effectively addressing the challenges of smuggling, movements of criminals and trafficking.

"We have an understanding with regard to fencing the border for security, the two border forces -- BSF and BGB -- have been in communication.

"We expect that the understanding will be implemented and there would be a cooperative approach to combatting crimes along the border."

Next polls

FROM PAGE 1

and to invest more in the country.

"Use Bangladesh as a base for distributing Norwegian products in Asia so that you don't need to bring your people from Norway and can use our young people," he said.

Highlighting the success of Grameenphone, the first overseas venture of Norwegian telecom giant Telenor, Yunus emphasised its transformation into the most profitable entity within the Telenor group.

Gulbrandsen presented a letter from Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store, which expressed strong support for Bangladesh's interim government.

"The prime minister has strong support for your efforts to initiate much-needed reforms and conduct free and fair democratic elections," the ambassador said.

The Norwegian envoy also conveyed his country's appreciation for Bangladesh's commitment to protecting human rights and promoting environmental sustainability.

He added that Norway is keen to collaborate with Bangladesh in the ship recycling industry and in advancing the green energy transition.

The chief adviser sought Norway's assistance in resolving the Rohingya crisis amid the changing political situation in Myanmar.

"Norway played a big role in peacekeeping. So, we need your help in resolving the Rohingya crisis," Yunus said.

The ambassador expressed Norway's eagerness to work closely with Bangladesh in international forums on issues including the Palestinian conflict, international tax regulations, and plastic pollution.

Marianne Rabe Knaeveldsrud, Norway's deputy head of mission in Dhaka, expressed gratitude for Bangladesh's support of the Norwegian-led UN resolution on humanitarian access in Palestine.

Top criminals on extortion spree

FROM PAGE 1

The release of some top criminals after the political changeover last year fuelled the concerns, said police officers and victims.

Names of criminals like Subrata, who was among 23 people listed by the police as "top terror" in 2001, have emerged in connection with incidents of extortion. The others include Abbas Ali alias Killer Abbas, Sanjidul Hassan Emon, and Imamul Hasan Helal alias Pichchi Helal.

Subrata's gang has reportedly been active in Moghbazar, Malibagh, Eskaton and surrounding areas; Abbas in Mirpur, Kafrul and Bhashantek; Emon in Dhanmondi, New Market and Mohammadpur Beribandhi; and Helal in Mohammadpur and Agargaon.

Of them, Helal was even named in a murder case filed with Mohammadpur Police Station on September 21 last year.

Hafizur Rahman, inspector (investigation) of the police station, said, "We have filed several extortion cases in recent months. We act on complaints regardless of who is involved."

Regarding Helal, Hafizur said, "We are conducting drives to arrest him, but his whereabouts remain unknown."

Then a Chhatra Dal leader, Helal was arrested on January 12, 2000. He was released on bail on August 16 last year.

In the latest incident, Helal's brother Wahedul Hasan Dipu was among two computer traders who were hacked allegedly by Emon's gang on Elephant Road on Friday night. A case has been filed against Emon and nine of his associates with New Market Police Station in connection with the attack.

Along with Wahedul, president of Elephant Road Computer Baboshayee Kallyan Samity (ECS), Ehteshamul Haque, joint general secretary of Multiplan Shop Owners Association, was hacked by a group of around 20

armed with machetes in front of the Multiplan Centre.

Wahedul, who was elected ECS president on December 28, told The Daily Star he had received a phone call from someone identifying himself as Chanchal a few days before the election.

"During the conversation, another man, who introduced himself as Emon, joined the call and demanded a monthly payment from me but I refused to pay," he said, adding that he hung up the call without engaging further.

Last year, while Emon was in jail, his name cropped up when an anonymous caller claiming to be a member of his gang demanded a meeting with a businessman in the capital's Mohammadpur after the latter purchased a six-decimal piece of land in Dhanmondi.

When the businessman went there, he was allegedly blindfolded and taken to a building where a man demanded Tk 10 lakh from him and gave him a three-day deadline.

Fearing for his safety, he paid the amount. After Emon walked out of jail on bail on August 15 last year, his gang allegedly demanded an additional Tk 10 lakh from the businessman in December.

"I don't know how to continue my business under constant threats," the businessman said.

The gang of another top criminal, Abbas, allegedly demanded Tk 3 lakh from a contractor, subsequently blocking the demolition of two buildings of a government primary school in Bhashantek in December.

An associate of the contractor who won the Tk 15 lakh work said, "We barely make a profit from selling scrap materials like rods and bricks. We offered Tk 1.5 lakh, but the gang refused to let us work. We cannot even file a complaint because of death threats."

Several employees of the school, requesting not to be named,

At the meeting, Jashim Uddin also referred to the recent killing of a Bangladesh citizen by BSF in Sunamganj and expressed concern and disappointment over such persistent border killings despite repeated commitments from the Indian authorities to pursue a non-lethal strategy to stop killings.

He strongly called for urgent action by India to stop recurrence of such incidents; conduct enquiries into all the border killings; and take action against those responsible.

Jashim Uddin added that Bangladesh believes such issues should be resolved through constructive dialogues, in accordance with existing bilateral agreements, and in a way that upholds peace and tranquility along the border.

confirmed a tender was issued in late November to demolish the buildings and construct a new six-storey complex, but the work did not begin because of the criminals' threats.

Foyzal Ahmed, OC of Bhashantek Police Station, said no complaints over the incident were filed. "We will send a police team to investigate the incident and take necessary action."

Since December last year, a gas line contractor has been receiving threatening calls demanding Tk 3 lakh in the name of top criminal Arman Khan.

"Some eight contractors and job holders received the same kinds of threat calls over the month. Some already made payments. I am passing my days in fear as they have threatened to abduct my kids since I have not paid yet," the contractor told this newspaper, requesting anonymity.

Golam Azam, officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, said they received no complaints over Arman's men threatening the contractor yet. He urged the victims to inform the police when such incidents occur.

Sources in the police said while top criminals were active, some fraud gangs were also threatening people for extortion by using the names of the criminals.

Evidence suggests such fraud gangs were also active in the past as the top criminals continued to terrorise businesspeople from jail or abroad, the sources said.

Asked about top criminals getting involved in extortion after coming out of jail, SN Nazrul Islam, additional commissioner (crime and operation) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star, "No matter who they are, if anyone is found involved in criminal activities, lawful action will be taken against them."

"Police are aware and have increased vigilance. We are conducting drives to arrest offenders."

ACC sues Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

of housing and public works ministry; RAJUK officials, including Anisur Rahman Mia, former chairman, Md Khurshid Alam, member (estate and land), Kabir Al Asad, member (administration and finance), Tanmoy Das, member (development and control), Md Nasir Uddin, former member (planning), Major (enr.) Shamsuddin Ahmed Chowdhury (ret'd), former member (development), Hafizur Rahman, deputy director (estate and land-3), Habibur Rahman, deputy director (estate and land-3), Sheikh Shahinul Islam, director (estate and land-2), and Md Nurul Islam, member (estate and land).

According to the ACC documents, Hasina, in collusion with senior Rajuk officials, had six plots of land allotted to herself, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, daughter Saima Wazed, younger sister Sheikh Rehana, her

son Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby, and her daughter Azmina Siddiq, in violation of existing regulation.

The six plots, each measuring 10 kathas, are in the diplomatic zone of Sector-27 in the Purbachal New Town project.

This is the fourth probe by the ACC against Hasina, after her fall on August 5. While Saima, Radwan, and Azmina are facing corruption probes for the first time.

On December 17, 2024, the ACC launched a probe into allegations of embezzlement totalling Tk 80,000 crore against Hasina and her family members from nine projects, including the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

On December 22, 2024, the commission also launched an investigation against Hasina and Joy over allegations of laundering \$300 million to the United States.

First HMPV case

FROM PAGE 1

winter and spring, and symptoms range from mild cold-like illness to severe respiratory conditions, such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia, according to IEDCR.

Halimur said the infected woman is a homemaker, who has no history of travelling abroad. Her husband lives abroad, but he has not visited the country recently.

He said the woman resides in Narsingdi, where she contracted the virus. HMPV and a bacterial infection has made her condition somewhat complicated.

Addressing concerns about the HMPV virus, Halimur told The Daily Star that there is no need to panic

washing hands, maintaining hygiene, and staying hydrated.

Halimur also mentioned that individuals with two or three underlying health conditions, as well as those under the age of five and above 65, are at greater risk of being infected with this virus.

There is currently no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment for HMPV. Management focuses on supportive care, including hydration, fever reduction, and in severe cases, oxygen therapy or mechanical ventilation. Most people recover on their own within seven to 10 days, according to IEDCR.

Meanwhile, the DGHS yesterday issued a seven-point directive, including wearing masks and washing hands with soap and water, to prevent the spread of HMPV.

Earlier on January 8, Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of IEDCR, said HMPV was first detected in Bangladesh in 2017. Since then, it has been identified almost every year to some extent. However, no casualty has so far been reported.

Although the virus has been detected in many individuals so far, there is no record of significant complications, she said, adding that there is currently no reason to panic about the HMPV virus.

In a statement on that day, Bangladesh Health Watch (BHW), civil society advocacy and monitoring network dedicated to improving the health system in Bangladesh, called on the health authorities to strengthen surveillance, enhance diagnostic capacity, and ensure the availability of medical resources before the disease enters the country.

On January 6, India confirmed its first three cases of HMPV in the southern state of Karnataka and Gujarat, officials and media reports said.

News of the current outbreak of the disease followed an announcement by China's National Administration of Disease Control and Prevention that it was testing a new reporting protocol in response to pneumonia cases, reports Deutsche Welle.

about this virus. It has been detected in the country before, and the mortality rate from this virus is very low.

He emphasised that we need to be more cautious by wearing masks,

WHAT TO DO?

Use masks

Cover your nose, mouth while sneezing, coughing

Dispose of used tissues immediately in a covered trash bin

Wash hands with soap or use a hand sanitiser

Avoid contact with infected individuals

Maintain three-feet distance from the infected

Avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth

Stay home if there is a fever, cough, or breathing difficulties

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Lawyer sues Hasina, Joy over attempted murder

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy and 91 others were sued yesterday on charges of making an attempt to kill a female lawyer during the mass uprising on August 4 last year.

Nupur Akhter, a lawyer of Dhaka Bar Association, filed the case with the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Saifur Rahman.

After the hearing, the magistrate recorded the statement of the complainant and asked the officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station to register the complaint as a first information report (FIR), said a staffer of the court.

Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, former law minister Anisul Huq, former South

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



A man hops over the rail lines despite an oncoming train just 15-20 feet away from him. Even worse, three children sit on the front of the train. A slight misstep or mistiming could lead to an accident. The photo was taken in the Mohakhali Rail Gate area yesterday.

1,184 suspected muggers held in 103 days: DMP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday announced that they have arrested 1,184 suspected muggers across the capital in the past 103 days as part of preventive measures to curb crimes.

Mohammad Nasirul Islam, DMP's joint commissioner (DB South), shared this information during a press briefing at the DMP Media Centre.

In response to a query about the rising incidents of mugging in the capital, Nasirul said several measures have already been implemented to address the issue.

Checkpoints have been set up by the Detective Branch (DB) and local police across various locations in the city, and their numbers have been increased. Alongside regular patrols, intelligence surveillance has also been intensified, he said.

He mentioned that ongoing operations are being conducted to dismantle mugging rings by analysing the criminal database and identifying their networks.

The DB and local police are conducting operations in crime prone areas with the help of informants, he added.

Sharing arrest statistics, the DB official said 98 suspected muggers were arrested in October, 148 in November, and 564 in December from different parts of the capital. In the first 11 days of January, 374 individuals were apprehended.

Nasirul expressed hope that bringing offenders to justice and ensuring they remain in prison after legal proceedings will help reduce the number of muggers and alleviate the problem over time.

Polls by this year vital

BNP tells EU envoy; discusses election roadmap, reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Holding national elections within this year is imperative since a country cannot run itself under an undemocratic governance for long, said BNP yesterday.

The party conveyed this message to European Union (EU) Ambassador to Bangladesh Michael Miller when he visited the BNP chairperson's office in Dhaka's Gulshan around 3:30pm.

The party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, standing committee members Moyeen Khan and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, and the chairperson's foreign affairs advisory committee member Shama Obaid were present at the meeting.

Afterwards, Khasru briefed journalists highlighting BNP's stance on the importance of restoring democracy through the elections.

He said, "A country cannot run under an undemocratic process for long. Undemocratic governments lack political weight, mobilisation capacity, and public engagement. They don't receive feedback from the people. That is why we emphasised the urgency of transitioning to a democratic process as soon as possible."

The discussions also touched on the election roadmap, reforms, and state of the economy.

On reforms, Khasru said, "Reforms that achieve

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

SEEKING POLICE SERVICES

38pc faced harassment, 31pc paid bribes: study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty percent of 2,040 university-level students who participated in a recent survey reported paying bribes or facing harassment while seeking police services, while only 10.5 percent experienced smooth service.

The study, conducted by Dhaka University's Department of Development Studies found that 37.9 percent of respondents faced harassment, 9 percent relied on government officials' recommendations, 31.2 percent used bribes, gifts, or political influence, and 11.2 percent reported never receiving any service.

Respondents alleged that police often avoid accepting complaints against powerful political leaders or government officials.

Conducted by the Centre on Budget and Policy Research Group on Governance and Public Policy,



- RECOMMENDATIONS**
- Independent commission
 - Keep force free from political interference
 - Conduct ethics training
 - Set up public complaint centres
 - Publish complaint, probe progress weekly

the study employed a mixed-method approach, including 20 focus group discussions with 250 participants from nine institutions.

Of the total 2,040 respondents, 1,038 were students from public universities, 395 from private universities, 508 from colleges affiliated with the National University or other public universities, and 99 from Fazil and Kamil madrasas.

Among the respondents, 35.7 percent were aged 22-23, 30.2 percent were 20-21, 22 percent were 24-25, 5.1 percent were 25 or older, and 7 percent were under 19.

The findings, presented yesterday at the Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury Auditorium of Dhaka University, were shared by Professor Kazi Maruful Islam at a seminar titled "Building a People-Friendly, Accountable and Professional Policing System in Bangladesh 2.0:

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'Now is the time to pursue stories without fear'

Shafiqul says country seeing unprecedented media freedom

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is experiencing "unprecedented media freedom" as it transitions to democracy, said Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday.

Speaking at the launch of the "Development Media Forum" by Oxfam at a city hotel, he said, "We haven't used security agencies, administrative orders, or repressive laws to muzzle people's voices over the last five months."

Encouraging journalists to ask tough questions, Shafiqul said, "You can criticise me, the panel of advisers, and the chief adviser. You have that freedom."

Highlighting the role of the media, he said, "For democracy to be institutionalised, media freedom is crucial. Now is the time for journalists to pursue any stories without fear."

Shafiqul criticised unchecked development projects, both public and private, for harming the environment and marginalised communities.

"Powerful lobby groups harm nature in the name of job creation. Is it development?" he asked.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

TK 57.13CR GRAFT

Court orders to confiscate ex-MP Henry's properties

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate and freeze all movable and immovable properties of Jannat Ara Talukder Henry, a former Awami League lawmaker from the Sirajganj-2 constituency, in a case filed over amassing Tk 57.13 crore illegally.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after Asif Al-Mahmud, an assistant director of the ACC, submitted an application in this regard, according to an ACC official present in court.

ACC Public Prosecutor Md Rezaul Karim Reza submitted the application.

The ACC official said these properties should be frozen and confiscated to ensure a fair investigation.

On January 6, Henry was shown arrested in a case filed on December 25, 2024.

Take steps in 7 days to stop air pollution

HC directs govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing serious concern over the current levels of air pollution in Dhaka, the High Court yesterday directed the government to take effective measures in seven days to stop air pollution in the capital.

It also ordered the authorities concerned to implement the nine directives issued by this court in February 2020 to stop Dhaka's air pollution and to submit a compliance report before this court by January 23.

The HC bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Debasish Roy Chowdhury delivered the order during hearing of a petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) in 2019.

Following the same petition, the HC in February, 2020, issued nine directives on the authorities concerned to keep this pollution in check.

The directives are: covering goods in trucks and other vehicles transporting soil/sand/waste in Dhaka; covering soil/sand/cement/stones/construction materials in areas under construction; sprinkling water on the roads by the city corporation; ensuring compliance with tender conditions for road/culvert/carpeting/pit works; seizing vehicles emitting black smoke; determining the time limit for movement of vehicles as per the Road Transport Act and stopping the movement of such vehicles after the expiry of the time limit; closing illegal brick kilns; closing all tyre factories operating without environmental licences; taking steps by the city corporation to ensure that daily waste bags are filled in markets/shops and their removal.



People try to salvage whatever they can after a fire broke out at a garage near the truck stand in Dhaka's Tejgaon area yesterday around 8:00am. Six trucks and several shops in the area were gutted due to the blaze, which was eventually doused around 9:00am. Authorities are investigating the matter and the cause of the fire could not be known immediately.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

JULY UPRISING

Constable opened fire on protesters on August 5

Prosecution tells ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Constable Sujon Hossain opened fire on a peaceful procession at Chankharpool, Dhaka, on August 5 last year. He was seen firing while lying on the ground, kneeling, and standing in the middle of the road as police shot at protesters, leading to seven deaths that morning.

The prosecution presented this account yesterday to the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) while Sujon, a member of the Armed Police Battalion (APBn), was produced before the court.

“A video capturing Sujon's actions went viral on social media, where he appeared very arrogant and fired numerous shots,” Prosecutor BM Sultan Mahmud told the tribunal.

The prosecutor submitted evidence suggesting that Sujon carried out the attacks on student-led protests.

Sujon was shown arrested in a case on charges of crimes against humanity.

The tribunal directed the prosecution to submit the investigation report by February 23 and ordered that Sujon remain in detention until then.

The three-member bench, led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Majumdar, chairman of the ICT, issued the order.

Hours before Sheikh Hasina fled on August 5, many students and people gathered at Chankharpool to march toward Shahbagh. However, police blocked their path, and members of the police and APBn opened fired to disperse the crowd, as shown in videos that went viral on social media.



Students and faculties of Jahangirnagar University bring out a procession on the campus to celebrate the institution's 55th anniversary yesterday. They marched carrying colourful banners and placards, honouring the university's rich history.

PHOTO: AURITRO SATTAR

Tea workers deserve better: Sarjis Alam

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Tea workers are living in dire conditions, said Sarjis Alam, chief organiser of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, yesterday.

“I am speechless seeing the tea workers' houses, especially as mothers and sisters live in such conditions,” he said at a rally in Kamalganj, Moulvibazar.

After visiting several tea gardens, Sarjis questioned the Awami League government's commitment to tea workers. “Did Sheikh Hasina's attention ever reach the tea gardens, from Gopalganj to Kamalganj? Have the brothers and sisters working here been forgotten?”

He criticised the inadequate weekly rations of 3.5kg of flour provided by garden management, calling it insufficient for families. “Just look at the workers' faces to understand their struggles,” he added.

He also addressed the lack of healthcare. “Garden hospitals have empty beds and no medicine. How can doctors provide treatment without resources?”

Sarjis announced plans for a national rally this month to demand justice for tea workers.

“We will not stop until their demands are met,” he said.

Lawyer sues

FROM PAGE 3

City Corporation mayor Fazle Noor Taposh, former Detective Branch of Police chief Harun Or Rashid and DMP joint commissioner Biplob Kumar Sarker are also among the accused.

In her complaint, Nupur said she took part in the student movement at Mohammadpur around 3:00pm on August 4 last year, where she was shot.

Later, she was admitted to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital.

Hasina is now facing 235 cases, including 205 for murders, 18 for crimes against humanity and genocide, three for abduction, 12 for attempted murder, and one for attack on a BNP procession.

38pc faced harassment

FROM PAGE 3

Students' Expectations and Reform Proposals.”

Students highlighted police officers' tendency to favour individuals based on social and economic status, with many respondents accusing police of being a political tool for the ruling party.

Around 70 percent of respondents recommended enacting and implementing laws to ensure police remain free from political interference.

Another 63.09 percent emphasised the importance of police ethics training, focusing on responsibility, political neutrality, and good practices.

Additionally, 68.5 percent suggested establishing anonymous public complaint centres, while 8 percent advocated increasing police manpower.

Nearly 70 percent urged the publication of weekly updates on complaint and investigation progress on

police station websites. About 25 percent suggested arranging monthly public hearings at police stations to improve accountability.

A significant 80 percent of respondents called for a politics-free, independent police commission, while 50 percent proposed establishing such a commission to oversee recruitment processes.

Respondents recommended the commission manage recruitment exams, handle human resources issues, and ensure police accountability.

Moreover, 42.79 percent advocated conducting recruitment exams through the Public Service Commission, while 40.93 percent called for regular salary increases, especially for lower-ranked officers.

To modernise police services, 31 percent of participants suggested installing body cameras on uniforms, while 30 percent advised digitising services.

Community policing initiatives were backed by 11.23 percent.

Further suggestions included publishing progress updates on complaints (71.27 percent) and ensuring access to information (59.71 percent).

Participants also stressed the need for public engagement, with 32.21 percent recommending increased police interaction with citizens and 25.15 percent advocating monthly public hearings.

Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling, professor of Political Science at the University of Nottingham, along with professors Taiabur Rahman and Asif Mohammad Shahan, and assistant professor Abul Bashar Md Omor Faruque, spoke at the seminar.

They said the colonial-era Police Act of 1861 should be reformed to meet the needs of modern-day Bangladesh, ensuring a professional and accountable policing system.

VAT hike to improve

FROM PAGE 1

have collected around Tk 1,26,000 crore, meaning a shortfall of Tk 42,000 crore.

“In this situation, we may not be able to meet payments for debt servicing,”

As such, Shafiqul added, the government has decided to increase VAT on some products.

When reporters queried if it would drive up inflation, he replied that higher revenue was needed to ensure that the value of taka does not go down.

He also said the tax revenue would be spent on people's welfare.

“We are not saying this will not impact the standard of living. We are saying that it will be minimal,” said the press secretary.

He said there were different rates of VAT, and the government is trying to bring those to a simplified 15 percent rate to cut the

tax leakage.

The interim government has also been trying to cut public expenditure to offset the widespread misuse of public money during the ousted regime, the press secretary said.

He said the government is communicating with other countries about bringing back wealth lost to capital flight, but it is a time-consuming process. He called it the government's top priority.

When asked why the government is bowing down to the International Monetary Fund's pressures to increase taxation, the press secretary said that getting the IMF loan will open doors to loans from other development partners.

At the press briefing, Shafiqul was joined by the Chief Adviser's Deputy Press Secretaries Apurba Jahangir and Abul Kalam Azad Majumder and Assistant Press Secretary Shuchismita Tithi.

3 arrested

FROM PAGE 2

CCTV footage showed the criminals broke the lock of the shop, stole the ornaments and exited it in just eight minutes when the employees went out for Friday prayers at around 1:00pm.

Following the incident, shop owner Kazi Akash filed a case with the Dhanmondi Model Police Station, stating that unidentified burglars had broken the locks of the showroom and stolen gold ornaments weighing 159 tola, valued at approximately Tk 2.50 crore.

Rubel was apprehended on Thursday while travelling home to

Chattogram from Cox's Bazar. His confession led to the subsequent arrests.

Further interrogation revealed the location of the stolen gold, which was traced to a jewellery shop in Companyganj Bazaar. There, 28.14 tola of gold ornaments and 21 tola of melted gold were recovered.

“In total, 50.8 tola of stolen gold, valued at approximately Tk 70 lakh, have been recovered. We have identified the those involved in the heist. Efforts are underway to apprehend the rest of the culprits and recover the rest of the stolen gold,” said Nasirul.

Polls by this year vital

FROM PAGE 3

consensus should be implemented immediately. There is no justification for delaying such measures.”

Khasru also expressed BNP's willingness to support any economic initiatives taken by an interim government that benefits the country.

“BNP has its own economic programmes,

which we will implement if we are elected by the people,” he said.

In response to questions from the reporters, he said, “Everyone understands that there is no way out of the current situation without elections. That is why the subject of elections is being repeatedly brought up in discussions.”

Request for Information: Data Center Consultancy Services

BRAC Bank PLC. delivers a full array of banking services to individuals as well as business entities with a network of 187 Branches, 74 Sub-branches, 329 ATMs, 446 SME Unit Offices and 1,114 Agent Banking Outlets. Currently the bank is seeking for vendor(s) to provide Data Center Consultancy Services.

A Request for Information (RFI) for Technical Offer Submission is issued for the mentioned purpose. The RFI along with details of the bidding process can be found on the bank's website <https://www.bracbank.com/en/information/e-tender>

Interested eligible bidders are requested to submit the technical offer as per the mentioned bidding process.

BRAC BANK
আমরা আপনাকে

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১। প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম : ২১ ই বেংগল, মোমেনশাহী সেনানিবাস।
২। কাজের বিবরণ : ক। কোম্পানী প্রশিক্ষণ শেড নির্মাণ এবং এতদসংক্রান্ত বিবিধ প্রশিক্ষণ প্রব্যাসামগ্রী ক্রয়।
খ। অভিযানিক ও নিরাপত্তা সক্ষমতা বৃদ্ধিকরণ বাবদ বিভিন্ন প্রব্য সামগ্রী ক্রয়।
৩। দরপত্র গ্রহণের তারিখ : বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ হতে পরবর্তী ১৪ দিন পর্যন্ত।
৪। দরপত্র গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ : বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ হতে পরবর্তী ১৪তম দিন পর্যন্ত।
৫। দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ : সিডিউল ক্রয়ের ন্যূনতম ১৪ দিন পর ১৫তম দিনে (সরকারি বন্ধ থাকলে অফিস খোলার দিন)।

আইএসপিআর/সেনা/১৮
১২/০১/২৫

অধিনায়ক
২১ ইস্ট বেংগল রেজিমেন্ট
মোমেনশাহী সেনানিবাস
মোবাইলঃ ০১৭৬৯২০৮১৭০

GD-125

Janata Bank PLC.

Head Office
IT Procurement, Security, Compliance and Maintenance Department
110, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000
Tel: +02223356514, Fax: 88-02-9564644, Telex: 675840 JBD BJ
Website: www.jb.com.bd

Invitation for e-Tender

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following goods:

Tender ID	Invitation Reference No.	Tender Description	Tender Publish Date & Time	Tender Closing Date & Time
1061265	JBPLC/ITPSCM/Proc-21/OTM/UPS Battery/2024	Tender for Procurement of Online UPS Battery with other equipment for CDC of Janata Bank PLC. following Open Tendering Method (OTM).	09/01/2025 17:30 PM	27/01/2025 12:30 PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Ready stock will be preferable and goods must be delivered after 05 days from contract sign.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP System portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP portal and e-GP Help Desk (Email: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

বিকাশ শাহিন
(Mohammad Shakawat Hossain)
Deputy General Manager

GD-126

Now is the time

FROM PAGE 3

Press Institute Bangladesh Director General Faruk Wasif said it is time to question whether inequalities have increased under the Awami League in the name of development.

“The so called development narrative of past years failed to ensure freedom, serving instead to establish authoritarianism,” he said.

Swedish Ambassador Nicolas Weeks highlighted the challenge of misinformation but pledged Sweden's support for good journalism in Bangladesh.

“Media can promote social justice and be the voice of the underrepresented,” he added.

Oxfam Bangladesh Country Director Ashish

PRAYER TIMING

JANUARY 13

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-30 12-45 4-00 5-36 7-00

JAMAAT 6-05 1-15 4-15 5-40 7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

District Primary Education Office
Chattogram
dpe.chittagong.gov.bd

আব্দার নম্বর-৩৮.০১.০৭০০.০০০.১১.০২৫.২১-৮৮৮ তারিখ: ০৮/০১/২০২৫খ্রিঃ

Invitation for Tender

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
2	Implementing Agency	District Primary Education Office
3	Project/program name	NBINNGPSPI Project
4	e-Tender IDs	1059595
5	Description of works	Supply of Furniture under NBINNGPSPI Project at different Schools at different Upazilas in Chattogram District. FY 2024-2025
6	Name, designation & address of official inviting tender	S. M. Abdur Rahman, District Primary Education Officer, District Primary Education Office, Chattogram.
7	This is online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Interested persons/Firms can see details in the website: www.eprocure.gov.bd	

S. M. Abdur Rahman
District Primary Education Officer
District Primary Education Office, Chattogram

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Shariatpur
ফোনঃ ০২-৪৭৮৮১৫৩১৪
E-mail: ccesar@rhd.gov.bd

আব্দার নং: ৩৫.০১.৮৬৬৯.৪৬৮.০৭.০০২.২৪-৬৩ তারিখ: ১২-০১-২০২৫

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the below works.

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of work/package description	Last selling date & time	Opening date & time	Remarks
1056506,	e-GP-01/EE/SRD/2014-2025 Development WP-01.	Re-Construction & New Construction of Flexible Pavement at 23rd (P) to 31st (P) km (Ch. 22+045 to 30+590m), 03 Nos. Bus-Bay, 02 Nos. Inter Section and Construction of 17 Nos. RCC Box Culvert at Gap No-23/1, 23/2, 23/3, 24/1, 24/2, 25/1, 25/2, 26/1, 27/1, 27/2, 27/3, 28/1, 28/2, 28/3, 29/1, 29/2 & 31/1 Extension of 07 Nos. R.C.C box Culvert at Gap No-25/1, 26/1, 27/1, 28/1, 28/2, 28/3 & 30/1 & Earthwork with Protective work of Shariatpur- (Monohar Bazar)-Ibrahimpur Ferry Ghat Road (R-880) under Shariatpur Road Division, during the year 2023-2024, (WP-01)	12-02-2025 16:00am	13-02-2025 12:00pm	Only online tender
1056619,	e-GP-02/EE/SRD/2024-2025 Development WP-02	Re-Construction & New Construction of Flexible Pavement at 31st (P) to 40th (P) km (Ch. 30+590 to 39+215m), 03 Nos. Plus-Bay and Construction of 14 Nos. RCC Box Culvert at Gap No-31/1, 32/1, 33/1, 35/1, 35/2, 36/1, 37/1, 37/2, 38/1, 38/2, 38/3, 38/4, 38/5, & 39/1 Earthwork with Protective work of Shariatpur (Monohar Bazar)-Ibrahimpur Ferry Ghat Road (R-860) under Shariatpur Road Division, during the year 2023-2024 (WP-02).	12-02-2025 16:00am	13-02-2025 12:30pm	Only online tender.
1056693,	e-GP-03/EE/SRD/2024-2023 Development WP-03	New Construction & Side Widening of Flexible Pavement from Ch. 39+215Km to 47+220Km, 02 Nos. Bus-Bay and Construction of 03 Nos. RCC box Culvert at Gap No-40/1, 41/1, 42/1 & 04 Nos. RCC Box Culvert Extension and 01 No. 44.02m PC Girder Bridge with Others incidental work and Protective work of Shariatpur-(Monohar Bazar)-Ibrahimpur Ferry Ghat Road (R-660) under Shariatpur Road Division, during the year 2023-2024.	12-02-2025 16:00am	13-02-2025 13:00pm	Only online tender.

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

Sheikh Nabil Hossain
ID No. 602255
Executive Engineer (C.C), RHD
Road Division, Shariatpur

GD- 126

Jewellery shop owner’s house robbed 60-bhori gold, Tk 2 lakh looted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A gang of robbers looted at least 60 bhoori of gold and Tk 2 lakh in cash from a jewellery shop owner’s house in Chingaria area of Patuakhali’s Kalapara upazila on Saturday.

The incident took place around 8:00pm at the house of Mahadev Karmakar, owner of Oishi Jewellers.

“Three youths knocked on the front door saying they were looking for renting home. As we opened the door, they entered, and started assaulting me, and then blindfolded and tied up my aunt, mother-in-law before looting the gold ornaments and money,” said Arpita Sarker, wife of Mahadev.

“Hearing our screams, as our neighbour Anima Rani knocked on the front door, the three robbers escaped through the back door. No male members of the family were present at that time,” she added.

“Police have already visited the crime scene. Legal action will be taken once we get a written complaint from the victim family,” said Md Jewel Islam, officer-in-charge of Kalapara Police Station.



A man puts together multiple pieces of bamboo to make fences. This special type of bamboo is often used to make parts of houses in rural areas. Each 7.5 feet of bamboo sells for Tk 50-65. The photo was taken in Rangunia upazila of Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

Girl dies after being hit by train at level crossing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A seven-year-old girl was killed after a train hit her at the Digraj level crossing in Mongla upazila of Bagerhat yesterday afternoon.

The victim is Mariam, daughter of Rokon Sheikh of Digraj village, said police.

The incident happened when Mariam was returning home from school with her mother.

Witnesses said while they were attempting to cross the rail track, a train travelling from Khulna struck Mariam. She died on the spot.

Helal Sheikh of the area alleged the gateman at the level crossing failed to lower the barrier despite the approaching train, which led to the fatal accident.

Md Anisur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Mongla Police Station, said after the incident, locals blocked the road for an hour and a half, demanding action against the gateman.

The traffic later returned to normal after police brought the situation under control, the OC said.

He said they are looking into the incident.

<div>গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার</div> <div>জনপ্রশাসন মন্ত্রণালয়</div> <div>সরকারি কর্মচারী হাসপাতাল</div> <div>প্রশাসন-১ শাখা</div> <div>www.skh.gov.bd</div> <div>নম্বর- ০৫.৮৭.০০০০.০১১.১১.০০৭.২৪-৪২</div> <div>তারিখ: ২৮ পৌষ ১৪৩১</div> <div>১২ জানুয়ারি ২০২৫</div> <div>নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি</div> <div>সরকারি কর্মচারী হাসপাতালের রাজস্বখাতভুক্ত নিয়োক্ত পদসমূহে অস্থায়ীভাবে সরাসরি নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে নিয়ে উল্লিখিত পদের পার্শ্বে বর্ণিত শর্তে বাংলাদেশের নাগরিকদের নিকট থেকে অনলাইনে (http://skh.teletalk.com.bd ওয়েবসাইটে) দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে:</div>					২০	ক্যাথ ল্যাব টেকনিশিয়ান (রেডিওগ্রাফার) প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	৬	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে বিজ্ঞান বিভাগে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কোনো স্বীকৃত হাসপাতালে ক্যাথ ল্যাব টেকনিশিয়ান (রেডিওগ্রাফার) হিসাবে অনূন ০১ (এক) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা; (গ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					২১	ইলেকট্রো মেডিকেল টেকনিশিয়ান প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	৬	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে বিজ্ঞান বিভাগে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কোনো স্বীকৃত হাসপাতালে ইলেকট্রো মেডিকেল টেকনিশিয়ান হিসাবে অনূন ০১ (এক) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা; (গ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					২২	টেকনিশিয়ান (বায়োমেডিকেল) প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	৬	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে বিজ্ঞান বিভাগে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কোনো স্বীকৃত হাসপাতালে টেকনিশিয়ান (বায়োমেডিকেল) হিসাবে অনূন ০১ (এক) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা; (গ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					২৩	ডায়ালাইসিস টেকনিশিয়ান প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	২৭	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে বিজ্ঞান বিভাগে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কোনো স্বীকৃত হাসপাতালে ডায়ালাইসিস টেকনিশিয়ান হিসাবে অনূন ০১ (এক) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা; (গ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					২৪	টেকনিশিয়ান গ্যাসট্রোএন্টলজি প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	৬	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে বিজ্ঞান বিভাগে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কোনো স্বীকৃত হাসপাতালে গ্যাসট্রোএন্টলজি টেকনিশিয়ান হিসাবে অনূন ০১ (এক) বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা; (গ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					২৫	কম্পাউন্ডার প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	১	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে বিজ্ঞান বিভাগে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কোনো স্বীকৃত প্রতিষ্ঠানে কম্পাউন্ডার হিসাবে অনূন ০১ (এক) বৎসরের কাজের অভিজ্ঞতা; (গ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					২৬	রেকর্ড কিপার প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	২	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					২৭	সহকারী হিসাব রক্ষক প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	৪	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে ব্যবসায় শিক্ষায় অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					২৮	হিসাব সহকারী প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	২	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে ব্যবসায় শিক্ষায় অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					২৯	রেকর্ড কালেক্টর প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	৪	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					৩০	ক্যাটালগার প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	১	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কোনো স্বীকৃত প্রতিষ্ঠান হইতে গ্রন্থাগার ও তথ্য বিজ্ঞান বিষয়ে সার্টিফিকেট কোর্স; (গ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					৩১	জুনিয়র মেকানিক প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	৩	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে ইলেকট্রিক্যাল বা এয়ার কন্ডিশনিং ট্রেডে উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট (ভোকেশনাল) পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; এবং
					৩২	ইনস্ট্রুমেন্ট কেয়ারটেকার প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	৩	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট (ভোকেশনাল) বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					৩৩	হাউজ কিপার প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	১০	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					৩৪	লিনেন কিপার প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	১০	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					৩৫	ওয়ার্ড মাস্টার প্রেড-১৬ (৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	৫	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কম্পিউটার MS Office এ কাজ করিবার দক্ষতা।
					৩৬	অফিস সহায়ক প্রেড-২০ (৮২৫০-২০০১০/-)	অনূর্ণ ৩২ বছর	৮	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে অনূন জিপিএ ২.৫০ এ মাধ্যমিক স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ।

২। আবেদন স্বরম পূরণ এবং পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের ক্ষেত্রে নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্তাবলী অবশ্যই অনুসরণ করতে হবে:

ক. ৩১ জানুয়ারি ২০২৫ তারিখে প্রার্থীর বয়সসীমা বিজ্ঞপ্তির ৩ নং কলামের বর্ণনা অনুযায়ী অনূর্ণ ৩২ (বত্রিশ) বছর হতে হবে। বয়স প্রমাণের ক্ষেত্রে এফিডেভিট গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়;

খ. সরকারি, আধা-সরকারি ও স্বায়ত্বশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানে চাকরিরত প্রার্থীদের অবশ্যই যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের অনুমতিক্রমে আবেদন করতে হবে এবং মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত অনাপত্তি ছাড়পত্রের মূলকপি জমা দিতে হবে;

গ. নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে সরকারের বিদ্যমান বিধি-বিধান এবং পরবর্তীতে এ সংক্রান্ত বিধি-বিধানে কোন সংশোধন হলে তা অনুসরণ করা হবে;

ঘ. লিখিত, মৌখিক ও ব্যবহারিক পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য কোনো প্রকার টিএ/ডিএ ভাতা প্রদান করা হবে না;

ঙ. বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে উল্লিখিত পদের সংখ্যা হাস/বৃদ্ধি অথবা বিজ্ঞপ্তি বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করে;

চ. শূন্যপদ পূরণে ‘সরকারি কর্মচারী হাসপাতাল (কর্মচারী) নিয়োগ বিধিমালা, ২০২৪’ অনুসরণ করা হবে;

ছ. সহকারী লাইব্রেরিয়ান, রেকর্ড কিপার, সহকারী হিসাবরক্ষক এবং হিসাব সহকারী পদের ক্ষেত্রে লিখিত পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ প্রার্থীদের ব্যবহারিক পরীক্ষায় অবতীর্ণ হতে হবে এবং শুধু ব্যবহারিক পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ প্রার্থীগণই মৌখিক পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন;

জ. অনলাইন ব্যতীত অন্য কোনো মাধ্যমে আবেদন গ্রহণ করা হবে না;

ঝ. নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত যে কোনো বিষয়ে নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।

৩। আবেদন পূরণ সংক্রান্ত তথ্যাবলী:

আবেদনকারীগণ <http://skh.teletalk.com.bd> ওয়েবসাইটে আবেদনপত্র পূরণ করবেন। আবেদনের সময়সীমা নিম্নরূপ:

(ক) Online- এ আবেদনপত্র পূরণ ও পরীক্ষা ফি জমাদান শুরুর তারিখ ও সময়: ১৪/০১/২০২৫ (মঙ্গলবার), সকাল ১০:০০ টা।

(খ) Online- আবেদনপত্র জমাদানের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়: - ১৩/০২/২০২৫ (বৃহস্পতিবার), বিকাল ০৫:০০ টা।

(গ) পরীক্ষার ফি বাবদ নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে উল্লিখিত ১-৯ নম্বর ক্রমিকের পদের জন্য ১৫০/- টাকা, Teletalk এর সার্ভিস চার্জ বাবদ ১৮/- টাকাসহ মোট ১৬৮/- টাকা এবং ১০-৩৫ নম্বর ক্রমিকে বর্ণিত পদের জন্য ১০০/- টাকা, Teletalk এর সার্ভিস চার্জ বাবদ ১২/- টাকাসহ মোট ১১২/- টাকা এবং ৩৬ নম্বর ক্রমিকে বর্ণিত পদের জন্য ৫০/-টাকা, Teletalk এর সার্ভিস চার্জ বাবদ ০৬/-টাকাসহ মোট ৫৬/- টাকা এবং অনগ্রসর নাগরিকদের জন্য সকল গ্রেডে (ক্রমিক: ১-৩৬ পর্যন্ত) ৫০/-টাকা, Teletalk এর সার্ভিস চার্জ বাবদ ০৬/- টাকাসহ মোট ৫৬/- টাকা অনলাইন আবেদন দাখিলের ৭২ (বোহাত্তর) ঘণ্টার মধ্যে আবশ্যিকভাবে জমা দিতে হবে। অন্যথায় আবেদনটি স্বয়ংক্রিয়ভাবে বাতিল হয়ে যাবে।

(ঘ) আবেদনপত্র পূরণ এবং পরীক্ষা ফি প্রদান সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞারিত নিয়মাবলী/শর্তাবলী <http://skh.teletalk.com.bd>, www.skh.gov.bd এবং www.mopa.gov.bd ওয়েবসাইটে পাওয়া যাবে।

১২/০১/২০২৫

মুহাম্মদ মোহাম্মদ হাসান

অতিরিক্ত মহাপরিচালক

ও

সভাপতি, নিয়োগ কমিটি

সরকারি কর্মচারী হাসপাতাল

geh@mopa.gov.bd

GD-127

WHAT'S
THE HAPS?

Play:
‘Khona’

Experience the timeless tale of ***Khona***, a powerful play written by Samina Luthila and directed by Mohammad Ali Haider. Through captivating performances and stunning visuals, the production explores themes of wisdom, resilience, and class struggles, while addressing pressing gender and class issues that remain relevant today.

Date: Friday, January 14

Time: 7pm-9pm

Venue: Experimental Theater Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy

What a debut, SUMAIYA SHIMU

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Famed television star Sumaiya Shimu made her OTT debut in the final episode of ***Dui Shaw***, appearing in ***Beshura***. Her performance mesmerised audiences, as she blended seamlessly into the role. The talented actress made her acting debut in 1999, and went on to work on numerous television projects.

When asked about how she came to work with Nuhash Humayun, the actress said, “Nuhash originally reached out to me. I wasn’t sure about being part of the series at first, because it involved filming outdoors. However, after meeting with Nuhash and having a conversation, I felt that it was a project worth pursuing, and that it would turn out well. That’s how I decided to begin my journey in the OTT space.”

Beshura was filmed in Sitakunda, and following its release both Nuhash Humayun and Sumaiya Shimu have been getting appreciation for the work. Shimu, in particular, is receiving praise from all quarters.

She shared, “Even after the shoot, many weren’t aware of the project. But once the promo aired, it caught everyone’s attention. I’ve received numerous calls, including from journalists. After



PHOTO: COLLECTED

that, everyone became aware of it. The fact that so many people have reached out to inquire about it has filled me with joy”.

Reflecting on her experience of working with Nuhash Humayun, the TV star revealed it was a wonderful experience. “Among the new generation of directors, Nuhash stands out. He has earned admiration and respect for his work, even internationally. His pre-production approach is exceptional. He is always composed and gave us artistes a lot of freedom. As a director, he communicated his vision for the camera with clarity.”

Regarding her experience in the OTT space, Shimu highlighted its advantages, crediting its high budgets, greater attention to detail, and consistent professionalism.

In response to being asked about future projects, Shimu said, “I’ll take on the work I’m passionate about, provided the right opportunities come my way. Nuhash’s project was one such example.”

As her career starts to flourish in the OTT space, Sumaiya Shimu eagerly anticipates more roles that resonate with her desire for meaningful and impactful work.



Shayan’s new track critiques political labelling

Farzana Wahid Shayan, known for her fearless voice of resistance, has released a new song titled ***Etai Amar Rajniti***.

Her song critiques the political labelling in the country, suggesting that questioning authority often invites suspicion about one’s allegiance.

Shayan’s message emphasises her independent stance, declaring that she belongs to no political party and follows her own path.

Initially performed informally two years ago, the track was officially launched last Friday (January 10).

Its lyric video, penned by Hasan Mahmud Sunny, adds to the song’s powerful message.

Since its release, ***Etai Amar Rajniti*** has sparked widespread discussion, garnering significant attention on social media platforms and YouTube.

Porshi reveals marriage to childhood darling

Sabrina Ehsan Porshi, who first rose to fame through Channel i’s reality talent hunt show ***Khude Gaanraj***, has completed an impressive 16-year journey in the music industry. Busy with stage shows and regularly releasing new songs, the singer-songwriter has reportedly taken a significant step in her personal life as well—she tied the knot with Niloy Alam, who currently resides in the United States, last year on March 4.

Porshi’s brother, Shakkhor, has confirmed the news of Porshi and Niloy’s wedding to The Daily Star. The two were in a long-term relationship before getting married. Both Porshi and Niloy were contestants in the same season of ***Khude Gaanraj*** back in 2008.

Porshi’s duet song with Imran, ***Kotha Ektai***, was a hit last year, garnering much attention. Apart from her music, the singer-turned-actress has also earned appreciation for her acting. She made her acting debut with the film ***Mental***, sharing the screen with Shakib Khan in 2016. She continued acting in television dramas from 2022 onwards.

Porshi recently announced her entry into drama production, with plans to produce her first drama for the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr, which is set to be aired soon.



Chorki’s ‘Feu’ follows the Marichjhapi massacre

The history of the Marichjhapi massacre, a dark chapter in the Sundarbans, forms the foundation of Chorki’s upcoming web-series ***Feu***. Set against the backdrop of the 1979 massacre, the series explores the intersection of politics and humanity, highlighting the brutal treatment of refugees.

The atrocities that occurred during this period inspired ***Feu***, a fictional web-series directed by Sukorno Shahed Dhiman for the OTT platform Chorki. Dhiman explained,



“There are many stories in the Sundarbans—tales of Bonbibí, bandits, and local myths. I, however, focused on the region’s politics for ***Feu***’s story to stem from.”

The story, written by Sukorno Shahed Dhiman and Romel Rahman, is set against a real historical backdrop. Dhiman and Siddiq Ahmed penned the screenplay. The director infused the series with his personal experiences from Mongla, his region, and his knowledge of local politics.

NEWS

Three-day mobile data packages return

FROM PAGE 12

logic doesn’t apply to the younger generation. It would be an insult to their intelligence to suggest that they cannot choose from a variety of packages,” he added.

Previously, the operators were limited to offering a maximum of 40 packages. Now, there are no restrictions on the number of products, data volume or validity.

However, the packages come with limits: 200MB for per-hour, 3GB for one day, 5GB for two-day and 8GB for three-day.

The new directive requires operators to provide unlimited packages that include both validity and data volume.

Offering packages between 12:00 AM and 6:00 AM is prohibited. Any unused data—both main and bonus—must be carried forward.

The mobile operators are barred from giving gifts to retailers. In emergency situations, the operators may offer free data, call minutes or SMS with post-facto approval.

The operators can send no more than three promotional SMS to each customer per day.

Earlier, only three unlimited packages (25GB, 50GB and 75GB) were allowed. Now, mobile operators can

offer unlimited packages based on customer demand, though a time limit must be set for unlimited data plans.

For loyalty point redemption, operators were previously limited to offering telecom products. Now, they can offer both telecom and approved non-telecom products.

International roaming, the Internet of Things, and corporate and SME services remain excluded from this directive.

Additionally, the mobile operators have been advised to optionally provide 200MB of free data each month to all active users to promote digital inclusion and increase internet usage.

TIM Nurul Kabir, a telecom policy analyst, expressed concern over the lack of long-term policy in the telecom and internet sector.

“I welcome the reintroduction of smaller packages. But I don’t understand why smaller packages were discontinued in the first place, as it hinders flexibility and compromises user freedom.”

He emphasised the need for consistent policymaking, criticising the contradictory approach of reducing package options at one point without justification and later reinstating them.

“Such inconsistent decisions,

combined with rising internet taxes, are limiting individual internet usage and leading to a decline in per-user internet consumption,” he added.

Telecom operators welcome the measures in the new directive.

“We believe this is a timely initiative for a data-driven digital society—this will greatly alleviate the accumulated dissatisfaction of consumers using digital services,” said Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer of Robi.

The directive will enable Banglalink to offer more straightforward, customer-centric products while simplifying operations, said Taimur Rahman, its chief corporate and regulatory affairs officer.

“We welcome the directive as it creates opportunities for us to deliver innovative services to our customers, ultimately enhancing their overall experience,” said Tanveer Mohammad, chief corporate affairs officer of Grameenphone.

The country’s largest operator however called for flexible and principle-based guidelines/directives as it can “play a significant role in bringing more people under digital inclusion, helping to reduce the digital divide”.

EC thinking about nat’l polls

FROM PAGE 12

elections together or even all the local polls together.”

He added that right now election reforms are ongoing and if needed, they will change the laws and rules in line with the possible reform proposals, which will also take time.

Sanaullah also said the EC will implement whatever decision is taken by the government, the relevant ministry and all authorities concerned.

“But our stance is that it won’t be possible to conduct all elections [parliamentary and local elections] together or even all the local government elections together.”

In the meeting, the EC also decided to keep activities regarding National Identity cards under its jurisdiction, including the cancellation of the National Identity Registration Act-2023 and restoring the 2010 act.

As per the proposal, a demi

official (DO) letter was sent from the commission to the government in this regard on September 10, 2024.

“Today [yesterday], we’ve decided to officially start talks in this regard through letters.”

About Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), he said the EC decided to take over the maintenance of the existing EVMs, though the use of the machines is uncertain.

Sanaullah also said the door-to-door voter updating process will begin this month, adding that the EC will formally launch the process on January 20.

Regarding the special forms for voter enrolment in certain areas to ensure that Rohingyas and foreign nationals are not in the voter list, he said many people were facing difficulties in filling out the forms, which was delaying voter registrations in those places. “So, we’ve, in principle, decided to make the forms easier.”

1 dies as BNP factions

FROM PAGE 12

deceased, said the attack was planned to kill his uncle ahead of the party council.

“We will file a case in connection with my uncle’s murder soon,” he said.

Md Mazharul Islam, the district BNP general secretary, said that the party would take action against those responsible for the violence.

No arrests have been made so far, he added.

In Jhenaidah and Kusthia, at least 36 people were injured in separate clashes between BNP and Jamaat men over the formation of school management committees yesterday.

In Jhenaidah, at least 21 people were injured in a clash between BNP and Jamaat men over the management committee for Nadpara Jubomilon Secondary School in Shaikupa upazila.

In Kusthia, at least 15 people were injured when BNP and Jamaat men clashed over the formation of Burapara Miton Secondary School management committee in Mirpur upazila.

DMCH doctor

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smartphones, and a laptop.

“The kidnappers assaulted my husband and forced him to cry in calls, in an effort to pressure us into paying the ransom,” said Aminur’s wife Luna.

Police are investigating the incident, and further legal steps will be taken, added the OC.

Tk 2,300cr

FROM PAGE 12

Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Dhaka and the Policy Research Institute.

“We want Nagad to become a worthy competitor to bKash. While bKash is doing a fantastic job, we need competition in the market, and Nagad is the closest contender to provide that. We are not killing Nagad; we are rebuilding it to a stronger position.”

He stressed the need for dialogue with the National Board of Revenue on the overall taxation of financial intermediation.

“Why is a deposit being taxed? That is not an activity; simply keeping a deposit is not a taxable action. It actually deters financial intermediation and discourages deposits.”

Bangladesh is already facing a serious problem with deposits not growing.

“Many households have complained to me, including my wife, asking why they should keep money in the bank when it’s being taken away by the government in the form of taxes. Is this really the best way to collect revenue? This is an issue we need to address.”

Yunus for probing UK properties linked

FROM PAGE 12

minister, to five London properties bought with the help of offshore companies.

These properties are not currently under formal investigation, but Yunus urged the Bangladesh Anti Corruption Commission to look into them as part of its ongoing inquiries into corruption and embezzlement under Hasina’s regime.

According to The Times report, one of these properties was a Hampstead home bought by an offshore company named in the Panama Papers. This particular company was connected to two Bangladeshi businessmen with ties to the Awami League. Tulip, who has previously spoken out against the use of offshore trusts to evade financial transparency, now faces intense scrutiny over her family’s dealings.

Tulip has denied any wrongdoings and described allegations against her as politically motivated.

The reports have triggered a storm in the UK, with opposition Conservative MPs calling for Tulip to resign. However, UK Prime Minister Kier Starmer has said he has full confidence in Tulip.

Tulip has referred herself to the UK

prime minister’s ethics watchdog. A Downing Street spokesman said it was “completely untrue” to suggest the party had drawn up a shortlist of candidates to replace her, as reported by some media.

In his remarks, Yunus expressed disbelief at the situation, noting that it was an “irony” that Tulip Siddiq, an anti-corruption minister in the UK, had been linked to these controversial properties.

While Yunus did not call for Tulip’s resignation, he emphasised that her defence of the properties raised serious ethical questions.

“Maybe you [Tulip] didn’t realise it, but now you do. You should say: ‘Sorry, I didn’t know it [at] that time, I seek forgiveness from the people that I did this and I resign.’ But she is not saying that. She’s defending herself.”

The scandal comes amid wider allegations of corruption surrounding Hasina’s government.

Asked whether Tulip’s properties should be investigated by the ACC, Yunus said, “Absolutely”.

He added that the commission should look at the “whole thing”.

He also said that, if feasible, the properties bought by AL allies outside the country using illegal wealth should

be returned.

“That’s the intention of the interim government. How to bring them back,” he said.

One of the key figures involved in the property purchases related to Tulip is Shayan Rahman, the son of Salman F Rahman, a billionaire and former adviser to Hasina. Shayan Rahman used an offshore trust to buy a £12 million property in Golders Green, London, which was used by Sheikh Rehana, Tulip’s mother.

Shayan is currently under investigation by the Bangladesh Criminal Investigation Department for laundering more than \$80 million out of Bangladesh, with funds allegedly funnelled through Dubai.

Salman F Rahman was arrested after attempting to flee the country, and his son’s whereabouts remain unknown.

Shayan Rahman is also known for his ties to the British Asian Trust, an anti-poverty charity founded by King Charles. He reportedly donated over £250,000 to the charity, and Charles publicly praised him for his support during a gala dinner at Buckingham Palace.

SYRIA SANCTIONS RELIEF EU to tackle issue at end of month

REUTERS, Riyadh

European foreign ministers will meet at the end of January to discuss the lifting of sanctions on Syria, the EU foreign policy chief said yesterday in Riyadh ahead of a meeting of top Middle Eastern and Western diplomats and Syria's new foreign minister.

Kaja Kallas, the EU foreign policy chief, said the foreign ministers would convene in Brussels on Jan. 27 in an effort to decide how the 27-nation bloc would relax sanctions on Syria.

After 13 years of civil war, Syria's President Bashar al-Assad was ousted in a lightning offensive by insurgent forces led by the Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) a month ago. The group has since set up a caretaker government in Damascus.

Any European decision to ease sanctions would be conditional on the new Syrian administration's approach to governing, which must include "different groups" and women and "no radicalisation", Kallas said, without elaborating.

"If we see the developments going to the right direction, we are ready to do the next steps...If we see that it's not going to the right direction, then we can also move back on this."

The conference, the first such meeting of Western and regional leaders hosted by regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia since Assad's ouster, comes as Damascus urges the West to lift sanctions to help funding flow more freely.

In a press conference held after wrapping up the conference, Saudi foreign minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said he stressed "lifting the unilateral and UN sanctions imposed on Syria as continuing ... sanctions will hinder the aspirations of the Syrian people to achieve development."

The US, Britain, the European Union and others imposed tough sanctions on Syria after a crackdown by Assad on pro-democracy protests in 2011 that spiralled into civil war. But the new reality in Syria has been complicated by sanctions on HTS - and some leaders - for its days as an al Qaeda affiliate.

Germany, which is leading the EU's discussion on sanctions, on Sunday proposed allowing relief for the Syrian population, but retaining sanctions on Assad allies who "committed serious crimes" during Syria's war.

"Syrians now need a quick dividend from the transition of power, and we continue to help those in Syria who have nothing, as we have done all the years of civil war," said German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock.

The United States on Monday issued a six-month exemption of its sanctions for transactions with governing institutions in Syria to try to ease the flow of humanitarian assistance and allow some energy transactions.

British foreign minister David Lammy joined the Riyadh talks along with ministers from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as the UN special envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen.



A child feeds another a spoonful of food as they sit atop graves at a cemetery where families displaced by conflict are taking shelter in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Top Israeli security delegation in Doha for Gaza talks

REUTERS, Jerusalem

A top-level Israeli security delegation arrived in Qatar yesterday for talks on a Gaza hostage and ceasefire deal, a spokesperson for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, in a possible sign of so-far elusive agreements nearing.

Qatar and fellow mediators Egypt and the United States are making renewed efforts to reach a deal to halt the fighting in the enclave and free the remaining 98 hostages held there before President-elect Donald Trump takes office on Jan. 20.

Netanyahu's office said on Saturday that the delegation includes Mossad Head David Barnea, the head of the Shin Bet domestic security service Ronen Bar and the military's head of the hostage brief, Nitzan Alon.

Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, met on Saturday with Netanyahu, after having met on Friday with Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

Israeli and Palestinian officials have said since Thursday that some progress has been made in the indirect talks between Israel and militant group Hamas but did not elaborate. The sides have been keeping a

tight lid on the details being worked out.

It is unclear how they will bridge one of the biggest gaps that has persisted throughout previous rounds of talks: Hamas demands an end to the war while Israel says it won't end the war as long as Hamas rules Gaza and poses a threat to Israelis.

Since October 7, 2023, more than 46,000 people have been killed in Gaza, according to Palestinian health officials, with much of the enclave laid to waste and gripped by a humanitarian crisis, and most of its population displaced.

On Saturday, the Palestinian civil emergency service said eight people were killed, including two women and two children, in an Israeli airstrike on a former school sheltering displaced families in Jabalia, in the northern Gaza Strip. The Israeli military said the strike had targeted Hamas militants who were operating at the school and that it had taken measures to reduce the risk of harm to civilians.

Later on Saturday, the Gaza Civil Emergency Service said five people were killed and several others were wounded in two Israeli strikes. One of the two strikes killed three people in a house near the Daraj neighborhood in Gaza City.

Russia claims new villages in eastern Ukraine

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday claimed the capture of two villages in eastern Ukraine where its forces have been steadily advancing for months.

The defence ministry said the southern group of forces had captured the village of Yantarne in the eastern Donetsk region, around 10 kilometres (six miles) southwest of Kurakhove, a key logistics hub that Moscow claimed to have seized last week.

On Saturday, Russia's army said it had also taken new territory northwest of Kurakhove.

The defence ministry said Sunday that Russian troops had also captured the village of Kalinove in the northeastern Kharkiv region.

The village is on the western bank of the Oskil River, which for a long time formed the front line between the two armies in the region.

But a Ukrainian official said Thursday that Russian forces had managed to establish a bridgehead on the western bank after crossing the river. Russia's army has spent months making attempts to cross the river, which also cuts through Kupiansk, a city recaptured by Ukraine.

Myanmar junta air strike kills 15

AFP, Bangkok

A Myanmar junta air strike killed at least 15 civilians and wounded 10 others at a market in a gold-mining area in northern Kachin state, a spokesman for an ethnic rebel group that controls the area told AFP yesterday.

The junta has been accused of carrying out multiple attacks on civilian targets as it struggles to quell resistance to its 2021 coup.

The latest attack happened around 11:00 am on Saturday, Colonel Naw Bu, a spokesperson from the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), told AFP.

"All those killed were civilians including gold miners and local shopkeepers," he said.

The KIA, which can call on around 7,000 fighters, has been battling the military for decades for autonomy and control of local resources in Kachin state.



Emon among 10 sued for attempted murder

FROM PAGE 1

Baboshayee Kallyan Samity (ECS), Ehteshamul Haque, joint general secretary of ECS Computer City (Multiplan Centre) -- were attacked by criminals with sharp weapons around 10:40pm Friday.

Wahedul, also the elder brother of Pichchi Helal, filed an attempt to murder case with New Market Police Station over the attack against 10 people and 20-25 unidentified others.

Emon, 52, was made the key accused in the case.

Meanwhile, police yesterday arrested Asiful Haque Asif alias Jhontu, 32, and Kawsar Mridha, 24, in connection with the

attack.

The first information report (FIR) states that after August 5, the accused began demanding money from the Multiplan Centre traders. When they refused, the accused threatened them.

Ehteshamul and Wahedul, along with other traders in the market, resisted the extortion and harassment, which led to the accused becoming enraged. Then they carried out the attack, according to the case statement.

Ehteshamul, who was hacked during the attack, is now undergoing treatment at a city hospital.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Wahedul, who was elected ECS president on December 28 last year, said he received a phone call from someone identifying himself as Chanchal a few days before the ECS election.

"During the conversation, another man, who introduced himself as Emon, joined the call, and demanded a monthly payment from me that I refused," he said, adding that he then hung up.

Wahedul, however, denied any involvement of his brother Pichchi Helal in the incident.


SN Nazrul Islam, DMP

additional commissioner (crime and operations), told this newspaper that the attack might have been due to disputes over the formation of the market committee and extortion.

"Top criminal Emon has been accused in the case, while the complainant is the elder brother of another top criminal Pichchi Helal," he said.

Nazrul added that they would also investigate whether a rivalry between the two top criminals played any role in the attack.

Emon and Pichchi Helal were among 23 gangsters listed by the police as "top terror" in 2001.



বিসএমআর মেরিটাইম ইউনিভার্সিটি, বাংলাদেশ

রেজিস্ট্রার দপ্তর (সংস্থাপন শাখা)

১৪/৬-১৪/২৩, পল্লবী, মিরপুর-১২, ঢাকা-১২১৬, মোবাই: ০১৭৬৯-৭১২০১০

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বিজ্ঞপ্তি নম্বর: বিএসএমআরএমইউ/রেজি-৩৩৬/২৫/০১

তারিখ: ১৩/০১/২০২৫

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের ২০১৩ সনের ৪৭ নং আইন দ্বারা প্রতিষ্ঠিত বিএসএমআর মেরিটাইম ইউনিভার্সিটি, বাংলাদেশ-এর জন্য নিম্নবর্ণিত শূন্য পদসমূহে কর্মকর্তা ও কর্মচারী নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে প্রকৃত বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট হইতে আবেদনপত্র আহ্বান করা যাইতেছে:


ক্রমিক নং	পদের নাম ও পদ সংখ্যা	গ্রেড ও বেতনস্কেল	সর্বোচ্চ বয়স	মন্তব্য
১.	সেকশন অফিসার-০১ (এক)			
২.	পাবলিক রিলেশন অফিসার-০১ (এক)	গ্রেড-৯, বেতনস্কেল ২২,০০০-৫৩,০৬০/-		
৩.	প্রটোকল অফিসার-০১ (এক)			
৪.	লিগ্যাল অফিসার-০১ (এক)			
৫.	উপ-সহকারী প্রকৌশলী (সিভিল)- ০১ (এক)	গ্রেড-১০, বেতনস্কেল ১৬,০০০-৩৮,৬৪০/-	৩২	১। শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা এবং আবেদনের শর্তাবলি সংক্রান্ত বিস্তারিত তথ্য বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ওয়েবসাইট (www.bsrmru.edu.bd)-এর Job Notice-এ দেখুন।
৬.	হিসাব সহকারী- ০১ (এক)	গ্রেড-১১, বেতনস্কেল ১২,৫০০-৩০,২৩০/-	২৮	২। আবেদনপত্র জমাদানের শেষ তারিখ ১৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৫।
৭.	সহকারী অডিটর- ০১ (এক)	গ্রেড-১২, বেতনস্কেল ১১,৩০০-২৭,৩০০/-		৩। বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের স্থায়ী ক্যাম্পাস চট্টগ্রাম (নেং মোহরা ওয়ার্ডে কাসুরঘাট এলাকায় থানা: বন্দর, জেলা চট্টগ্রাম)-এ নির্বাণীয়।
৮.	অফিস সহকারী কাম ডাটা প্রসেসর- ০৫ (পাঁচ)	গ্রেড-১৩, বেতনস্কেল ১১,০০০-২৬,৫৯০/-		
৯.	ইলেকট্রিশিয়ান- ০১ (এক)	গ্রেড-১৬, বেতনস্কেল ৯,৩০০-২২,৪৯০/-		
১০.	অফিস সহায়ক- ০১ (এক)	গ্রেড-২০, বেতনস্কেল ৮,২৫০-২০,০১০/-		



রেজিস্ট্রার

বিসএমআর মেরিটাইম ইউনিভার্সিটি, বাংলাদেশ

GD- 124



Gas Transmission Company Limited (GTCL)

(A Company of Petrobangla)

Plot No.F-18/A, Sher-E- Bangla Nagor Administrative Area, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.

“জালানী নিরাপত্তা
সর্বোচ্চ অগ্রাধিকার”

গ্যাস জাতীয় সম্পদ, এর অপচয় রোধ
করে জাতীয় দায়িত্ব পালন করুন

Invitation for Tender

Invitation for Hiring of 6(Six) Minibuses including Manpower

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources/Energy & Mineral Resources Division.		
2	Agency	Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Corporation (Petrobangla).		
3	Procuring Entity Name	Gas Transmission Company Limited (GTCL)		
4	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka.		
5	Invitation For	Hiring of 6(Six) nos. Minibuses.		
6	Invitation Ref. No & Date	28.14.0000.159.01.001.25 & Date : 09-01-2025		
KEY INFORMATION				
7	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method.		
FUNDING INFORMATION				
8	Budget and Source of Funds	Own Fund.		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
9	Division Name	General Services Division		
10	Tender Package Name	Hiring of 6(Six) nos. Minibuses (30 seated). Model 2016 or latest for 6(six) Routes.		
11	Tender Publication Date	13-01-2025.		
12	Tender Selling Date	From 16-01-2025 to 29-01-2025 (During office Hour)		
13	Tender Closing Date and Time	30-01-2025 at 12:00 PM.		
14	Tender Opening Date and Time	30-01-2025 at 3:00 PM.		
15	Name and Address of the Offices			
Selling Tender Document		a) Fund Department (Level-9), Head Office of GTCL. Plot No.F-18/A, Sher-E- Bangla Nagor, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.		
Receiving Tender Document		a) Committee Room (Level-3), Head Office of GTCL, Plot No.F-18/A, Sher-E-Bangla Nagor, Agargaon Dhaka-1207. b) Manager (Purchase), Level-3, Petrobangla,3, Kawran Bazar C/A Dhaka -1215. c) Local Purchase Department, Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration & Production Co.Ltd, BAPEX Bhaban (Level-4), Kawran bazar C/A Dhaka-1215.		
Opening Tender Document		Committee Room (Level-3) of GTCL, Plot No.F-18/A, Sher-E- Bangla Nagor, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.		
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER/SERVICE PROVIDER				
16	Eligibility of Tenderer/Service Provider	As per Tender Document.		
17	Brief Description of Services	Supply of 6(six) Minibuses for Commuting to GTCL Head office from different Locations of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Savar & Gazipur. Type of Vehicles: 6(Six) Minibuses, (30 seated) for 6 Routes. The Model of Minibuses will be 2016 or latest.		
18	Price of Tender Document (Tk)	Taka: 3,000.00 (Three thousand) (in cash) Non-refundable.		
Tender no. Location, Tender security Amount and completion Time				
	Package No	Description	Location	Tender Security Amount (Tk)
	01	Vehicle Hiring	Dhaka, Narayanganj, Savar & Gazipur.	Tk.3,000,000.00 (Three lac only)
COMPLETION TIME IN MONTHS/ YEARS				
				12 Months
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS				
19	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Sayed Mohibbul Alam Khaled		
20	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Deputy General Manager (Transport Control department).		
21	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Deputy General Manager (Transport Control Department), GTCL Plot No.F-18/A, Sher-E- Bangla Nagor, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.		
22	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Phone: +02-44827261(office)		
23	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings.			
24	If it is not possible to accept and open the tender on the scheduled date due to unavoidable reasons, the tender will be accepted and opened at the same time and place on the next working day.			
25	This tender will be conducted as per the Public Procurement Act-2006 & Public Procurement Rules-2008.			
26	This tender notice will be available at website of GTCL (www.gtcl.org.bd),Petrobangla and BPPA (www.bppa.gov.bd).			

GD- 122

Govt must reverse anti-poor decisions

Raising VAT, duties on over 100 products will make life more difficult

The National Board of Revenue's (NBR) decision to hike the value-added tax (VAT) and supplementary duty (SD) on more than 100 products is unwise and poorly timed, especially considering the persistent inflation and rising food prices. As economists and business leaders have pointed out, such a decision in the middle of the fiscal year is unlikely to bode well for the economy.

The increase in VAT and SD on arguably non-essential products—such as mobile phones, broadband internet, medicine, imported fruits, tissue paper, motorcycles, and liquified petroleum (LP) gas—is apparently intended to meet one of the conditions of the IMF for its \$4.7 billion loan support. Under the IMF programme initiated in 2023, Bangladesh needs to raise its tax-to-GDP ratio by increasing tax revenue collection. However, the country has so far fallen short of the targets. To achieve the IMF-recommended ratio, the government must collect an additional Tk 12,000 crore this fiscal year. The IMF is reportedly considering making the tax collection target a Quantitative Performance Criteria (QPC)—a mandatory benchmark for unlocking instalments under the loan programme. This puts immense pressure on the government to boost revenue mobilisation to secure the next tranche of the IMF loan.

But the question is whether drastically raising VAT and SD on products that are not necessarily luxurious is the right strategy. Indirect taxes such as VAT and duties are inevitably passed on to the end consumers. But people's purchasing power has not kept pace with inflation and rising food prices in recent years. Furthermore, as one businessperson told our correspondent, businesses are likely to either evade taxes or increase product prices to absorb the higher VAT burden. Additionally, even in this digital era, many business transactions remain untraceable, and revenue collection is not fully automated. As a result, meeting the revenue collection target by raising VAT and SD rates—a decision made without consulting stakeholders or experts—seems overly ambitious.

Another similar move that goes against the interests of consumers was the suspension of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) and the Department of Agricultural Marketing's truck sale programmes for essentials and agricultural products. It is unclear why the government would halt such pro-poor measures.

Instead of relying on indirect taxes that disproportionately affect the poorer sections of society, the government could have considered alternatives such as imposing a wealth tax or intensifying efforts to collect income taxes through targeted drives. The numerous tax exemptions granted to institutions and businesses without clear rationale should also be reviewed and restructured. Similarly, government expenditure could be reassessed to eliminate unnecessary costs. Such measures can still be taken instead of summarily raising VAT and duties. Finally, the government should engage with the IMF to renegotiate loan conditions, particularly those tied to the credit programme initiated by the previous regime. The bottom line is, poor and middle-class citizens must be spared additional monetary burden at this critical time.

Surge in hospital superbugs alarming

Authorities must take this invisible threat seriously

It is alarming to learn about the spread of drug-resistant microorganisms in our hospitals. According to a report by this daily, a recent study published in the British scientific journal "Nature" has revealed alarming levels of airborne, multidrug-resistant bacteria in the air of several hospitals in Dhaka. This highlights the grave health risks facing patients and healthcare workers, as exposure to these pathogens can lead to infections that are difficult to treat.

We have known for quite some time about the drug resistance in people caused by the indiscriminate use of drugs, especially antibiotics, often without prescriptions. Last year, the National Antimicrobial Susceptibility Report revealed that multi-drug resistance in people had reached an all-time high of 82 percent. The incidence of hospital-acquired infections (HAIs) caused by prolonged stays is also common knowledge. The latest research shows that one can be susceptible to drug-resistant infections by just breathing the air in hospitals. Conducted in four hospitals and two ambient locations, the study has identified harmful bacteria in the particulate matter (PM)—tiny particles in the air—collected from there. Among the 11 types of bacteria found in the air, many are known to cause serious HAIs like pneumonia and urinary tract and blood infections.

Moreover, the PM levels recorded in those hospital environments also exceeded both national and WHO standards, with Dhaka Medical College Hospital recording the highest concentrations. This interplay between air pollution and bacterial growth, as the lead researcher of the study has said, "added a new dimension to the battle against antibiotic resistance." Indeed, Researchers attribute the spread of airborne superbugs in hospitals to overcrowding, outdated infrastructure, poor ventilation, and old furniture—problems that, frankly, are common in most public hospitals in Bangladesh. The combination of these conditions is allowing bacteria to thrive and spread.

We urge the government to take decisive action to address this threat. Hospitals must be a place that heals patients suffering from diseases and infections—not a breeding ground for new, more dangerous infections. The problems identified in the above study show where corrective actions need to be taken. Improving hospital infrastructure, enforcing stringent infection control protocols, and upgrading ventilation systems should all be done with equal importance. Additionally, the authorities must address the overuse of antibiotics through stricter regulations.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

‘J'accuse’ published

On this day in 1898, French author Émile Zola published an open letter in the newspaper *L'Aurore* denouncing the French general staff for its role in the 1894 treason conviction of Jewish French army officer Alfred Dreyfus.

Raising VAT and shrinking social protection are unwise moves



MACRO MIRROR

Dr Fahmida Khatun
is executive director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and non-resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council.
Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

FAHMIDA KHATUN

As the people of Bangladesh continue to struggle to make ends meet during a high inflationary period, two recent government decisions are considered to have worsened the situation. First, the interim government raised the value-added tax (VAT) and supplementary duty (SD) on more than 100 products and services on January 9 through two ordinances. Second, a programme of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), launched in October 2024 to sell oil, lentils, and rice in trucks to low-income people, has been cancelled.

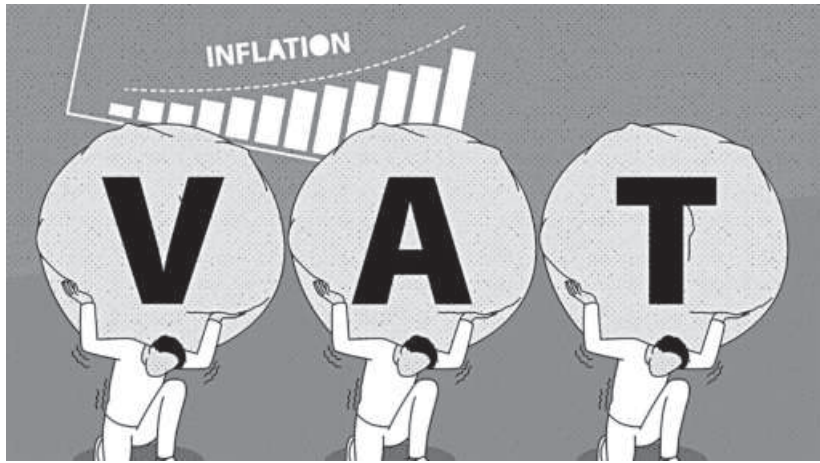
The VAT and SD on a number of items have been raised substantially. For example, VAT on sweets, clothes, and restaurant meals has been raised by 7.5-15 percent—a 100 percent increase. In some cases, the increase is even 200 percent. VAT at the production stage and SD on imports like fruit juice and colours have also increased. SD on mobile phone service has been increased by three percent.

These changes in the middle of the fiscal year are unexpected and unwanted as the economy faces significant challenges, including high inflation, low investment, low job

There should be ample supply in the market for consumers to buy at affordable prices. The government has to make enough procurement of essential agricultural products, including rice, at a just price from the farmers. It also has to import fast to stabilise the prices of essentials.

creation, and low economic growth. Several factors are responsible for low economic growth, including an already fragile economy left by the previous Awami League government, disruptions in economic activities during the July uprising, disturbances in the law and order situation following the ouster of the Awami League government on August 5, 2024, and a lack of confidence among domestic and external economic players.

The previous government did not take any meaningful measures to control inflation, which has been on the rise for nearly three years. The interim government is struggling to control high inflation as well. In December 2024, average inflation declined slightly, dropping to 10.89 percent from 11.38 percent of the previous month. Similarly, food inflation was 12.92 percent in December 2024, slightly lower than



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

13.80 percent in November 2024. However, both average and food inflation rates are still very high, as wages and salaries have not increased at the same rates. The monetary policy has been adequately tightened by increasing policy rates, but it has yet to impact the inflation. Besides, without supply-side management, inflationary pressure will not ease up. There should be ample supply in the market for consumers to buy at affordable prices. The government has to make enough procurement of essential agricultural products, including rice, at a just price from the farmers. It also has to import fast to stabilise the prices of essentials. Effective market management must be carried out to ensure the supply of commodities.

Understandably, the unexpected increase of VAT and SD is aimed at meeting the target of tax collection during FY2024-25 as set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Bangladesh borrowed \$4.7 billion from the IMF in January 2023, agreeing to fulfil more than 30 major

and minor conditionalities. One of the conditions is to raise the tax-GDP ratio by 0.5 percent each year till 2026. Unfortunately, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) has failed to fulfil its target set by the government in the national budget for about a decade. The NBR has to raise an additional Tk 12,000 crore in FY2024-25. It will be more difficult to fulfil the IMF target in the current fiscal year due to the recent political upheaval and economic instability. But the decision to fill the revenue gap by increasing VAT and SD is an inappropriate measure for several reasons.

First, this will increase the prices and fuel inflation further. Hence, the Bangladesh Bank's efforts to control inflation through contractionary monetary policy will take longer.

Second, VAT is an indirect tax passed on to consumers irrespective

of their income status. Even though the government tried to explain that most of these items are not consumed by the poor and thus they will not be affected, in reality, everyone will be impacted in one way or another. Some items are essential, and people will have to buy even if prices go up. For example, people from all income strata need food and clothes. Of course, the government has reduced tariffs on several imported items to ease pressure on their prices. Unfortunately, the benefit of tariff reductions on imported goods is not passed on to consumers due to dishonest traders. The market management mechanism is very poor at reversing such unethical practices. So, the decision to increase VAT will further erode the purchasing power of fixed-income households.

Third, there is also a possibility that the goal to collect more revenue through increased VAT may not materialise. Due to economic hardship, people may reduce their purchases with increased VAT.

Fourth, the business community

Protecting adolescents from the harm of social media



Laila Khondkar
is an international development worker.

LAILA KHONDKAR

US Surgeon General Dr Vivek Murthy recently published a report emphasising the urgent need to address the impact of social media on young people's mental health. He argued that policymakers should act based on a safety-first approach and set up guidelines to protect children's privacy and welfare. This call to action resonates globally, as nearly 95 percent of 13-17-year-olds use social media, with over one-third admitting to being constantly online.

While social media has the potential to educate, connect and entertain, its risks cannot be ignored. Studies reveal startling trends: adolescents spending over three hours daily on social media are twice as likely to face anxiety and depression. College students who limited their usage to 30 minutes per day for just three weeks reported significant reductions in depressive symptoms. These findings highlight an undeniable connection between excessive use and mental health challenges.

Adolescents can easily access content on social media that is inappropriate and harmful for their age. In some cases, content related to suicide, self-harm and risk-taking have led to teen deaths. Excessive and

problematic social media use has been linked to sleep problems, attention issues, and feelings of exclusion among adolescents.

The impact of social media on adolescents depends on several factors. These include how much time they are spending on the platform, what kind of content they are exposed to, what they are doing here, how they interact with others on the platform, etc. Not everyone is affected in the same way. At the individual level, everyone's abilities and risks are different. That factor also plays a role in the impact of social media on mental health. Despite individual differences in susceptibility, the patterns are clear: unchecked social media use is harming the youth.

There is not much data available on the mental health and social media usage of Bangladeshi adolescents. However, there have been media reports on them suffering because of this. There have been a number of cases of adolescent girls being raped and killed after meeting young men they got to know through Facebook.

Constant comparison on social media fosters dissatisfaction with physical appearances, often leading to eating disorders and erosion of self-confidence. This phenomenon is

especially prevalent among adolescent girls, magnifying the need for targeted interventions. The film *I Am Ruth* highlighted this issue. The story is about a mother who struggles to help her teenage daughter as she becomes obsessed with social media trends. Kate Winslet, who plays the role of the mother, says she doesn't allow her teenage daughter to use social media.

Constant comparison on social media fosters dissatisfaction with physical appearances, often leading to eating disorders and erosion of self-confidence. This phenomenon is especially prevalent among adolescent girls, magnifying the need for targeted interventions.

The responsibility to mitigate the harm of social media lies with governments, technology companies, educators, parents and guardians. While Bangladesh has introduced initiatives to teach online safety, these efforts must be expanded. Developing a comprehensive curriculum on social media literacy and safety is imperative. Equipping adolescents with knowledge will empower them to protect themselves. Digital and media literacy provides children and young people with skills to strengthen digital resilience, or the ability to recognise, manage and recover from online risks, e.g. cyberbullying and other forms of online harassment and abuse, as well

has also raised concerns about the negative impact of VAT and SD increases in the current situation. The interest rate on bank loans has gone up to about 15-16 percent as the policy rate has been increased to 10 percent. Businessmen have also complained about the gas crisis, extortions in goods transportation, and the fear of labour unrest. If the cost of doing business continues to rise, industrial production will decline, and export competitiveness may decline, having a negative impact on employment and economic growth.

Fifth, the government should have put forth its efforts to collect direct income taxes from tax evaders. Besides, the government could have also reviewed and restructured various tax exemptions given to institutions and businesses without much rationale. Streamlining the tax system can help collect more taxes and reduce NBR's dependency on indirect tax, which is regressive in nature. Over 65 percent of tax is collected from VAT. Such a tax structure must change to reduce inequality and establish tax justice in society. The weaknesses in collecting direct income tax have not been addressed by improving the efficiency of the tax administration till now. While reforming the tax system may take some time, immediate measures such as using technology to track tax evaders and enforcing strict tax compliance should have already been in place.

The second decision of the government—cancelling TCB's truck sale of some goods at subsidised prices—is also unwise and insensitive. It will further increase the hardship for low-income people. Another programme run by the Department of Agricultural Marketing since October 2024 to sell agricultural commodities from trucks at affordable prices has also been halted. These measures are worrying as they will exacerbate the difficulties of the poor and could push many families below the poverty level.

The ongoing fiscal year is challenging for both the government and the people. While individuals and businesses are trying to stretch their resilience through various cost-cutting measures, the government is also struggling to revive the shattered economy. However, its priority should be to give respite to people experiencing inflationary pressure. Unfortunately, the increase in VAT and the reduction of social protection measures will only increase people's suffering.

If economic and social realities are not factored into its decision-making process, the interim government will quickly become unpopular.

as excessive social media use.

Technology companies have a responsibility to prioritise the users' health and safety when developing social-media-related products and services. The state should come forward to ensure their accountability. Policymakers must establish robust safety standards to safeguard young users.

Creating a family social media plan can help balance online and offline activities, set time limits, and discourage sharing personal information. It is also necessary to practise being free of electronic devices for a certain amount of time every day.

Parents can play a vital role in ensuring their children's safety by helping with the development of their social and emotional skills, and by raising them to be self-confident. By spending time with their children and listening to them attentively, parents can learn about their interests and various aspects of life, including their friends. This way, they will be able to properly guide their children to navigate both the real and virtual worlds. Leading by example, parents who model moderate and mindful social media use encourage their children to do the same.

The stakes are high. If we fail to act decisively, the question posed by Dr Vivek Murthy will haunt us: "If we don't set safety standards and provide more support to young people and their parents, we will look back in five to ten years from now and say, what were we thinking?" Let's unite to protect our youth from the potentially devastating effects of social media, ensuring a safer and healthier future for the next generation.



FILE PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

The focus on recycling shifts responsibility from the producer to the consumer, perpetuating what researchers call the ‘plastic paradox.’

The plastic paradox

The crisis that won’t recycle itself

Uswatun Mahera Khushi is assistant professor of local government and urban development at Jatiya Kabi Nazrul Islam University.

Md Zahurul Al Mamun is a climate change researcher and analyst.

MD ZAHURUL AL MAMUN and USWATUN MAHERA KHUSHI

If we take a closer look at the failure of international efforts to combat plastic pollution, exemplified by the Fifth UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5), one thing stands out: the resistance from oil-producing nations to capping plastic production. According to Eunomia data, China, the US, India, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia were the top five polymer producers in 2023. These nations, heavily invested in the petrochemical industry, consistently prioritise profit over environmental protection. This treaty had the potential to be a game-changer—possibly as impactful as the 2015 Paris Agreement—yet competing economic interests left it on shaky grounds.

Now, a question might arise in one's mind: why? Because plastics are made from fossil fuels, and over the past 15 years, petrochemicals—especially plastics and oil additives—have become a critical pillar of the oil and gas industry's survival. Moreover, the plastics industry is the fastest-growing source of industrial greenhouse gases (GHGs). Groundbreaking research from Carbon Majors shows that just 100 active fossil fuel producers, including ExxonMobil, Shell, BHP Billiton, and Gazprom, are responsible for a staggering 71 percent of industrial GHG emissions since 1988. In 2019 alone, the production and incineration of plastic led to GHG emissions equivalent to those from 189 coal-fired power plants. Over the last 30 years, they have prevented political decisions against climate change, raised scientific doubt, and stopped any development that could regulate

nearly triple by 2060. This linear “take-make-waste” model is unsustainable. A staggering 79 percent of plastic waste accumulates in landfills or the environment, 12 percent is incinerated, and less than 10 percent is recycled. This raises a critical question: why has recycling failed so dramatically?

Plastics are inherently more complex than other recyclable materials, like metal or glass, due to their heterogeneous nature. Each type of plastic contains unique chemical additives—such as colourants, stabilisers and fungicides—that enhance functionality but complicate recycling. Even polyethene terephthalate (PET), one of the most recyclable plastics, degrades in quality with each recycling cycle, accumulating toxins that contaminate new products.

What's more, not all plastics are created equal. PET makes up only about six percent of global plastic production, while other types, like polyethylene (PE) and polypropylene (PP), are recycled even less frequently due to their distinct chemical structures and the presence of additives. These additives, designed to make plastics more durable, flexible and transparent, often combined during the recycling process, further degrading the quality of the material.

A common example is multilayer plastics—composites made from combinations of

products throughout their lifecycles. Besides that, these policies lack clarity, and responsibilities across the supply chain fall through the cracks, leaving implementation is still up in the air. Furthermore, the focus on recycling shifts responsibility from the producer to the consumer, perpetuating what researchers call the “plastic paradox.”

To drive real change, the government must enforce stringent policies that hold manufacturers responsible, or progress will remain elusive. Local governments are critical in implementing waste management policies but often lack the funding, technical expertise and accountability frameworks needed to enforce policies effectively. Lack of reliable data further complicates matters. Effective policymaking requires accurate information to guide decisions, and Bangladesh currently lacks a robust system for data collection, dissemination, and analysis, as well as dashboards to track progress. Without accurate and actionable data, even the most well-intentioned policies risk falling flat.

Local governments are uniquely positioned to collect and monitor data on waste generation and recycling rates, but they need the tools and support to perform this role effectively. Empowering municipalities with the necessary resources and authority can

Local governments are critical in implementing waste management policies but often lack the funding, technical expertise and accountability frameworks needed to enforce policies effectively. Lack of reliable data further complicates matters. Effective policymaking requires accurate information to guide decisions, and Bangladesh currently lacks a robust system for data collection, dissemination, and analysis, as well as dashboards to track progress.

plastic, aluminium and paper—frequently used in food and medical packaging. These materials are virtually unrecyclable with current technologies, illustrating how design choices can render recycling ineffective from the outset.

Recycling is not just a technical challenge—it's an economic one too. Sorting and processing plastics is labour-intensive and costly. Caps, labels, and differing grades of plastics require meticulous separation, which often costs more than the value of the recycled material itself. The result is a process so complex and expensive that new, high-quality plastics remain more profitable and marketable than recycled alternatives.

Another significant obstacle to effective plastic recycling is the lack of transparency from manufacturers. Many manufacturers keep their chemical formulations proprietary, making it difficult for recyclers to identify and eliminate hazardous substances. This secrecy undermines efforts to create a truly circular recycling system, allowing hazardous substances to remain in circulation.

The path forward

Bangladesh recognised the plastic problem early by banning single-use plastics in 2002 under the Bangladesh Environmental Conservation Act. It later introduced the National 3R Strategy for Waste Management (2010) and Solid Waste Management Rules (2021). However, on paper, these policies seem magnificent, but in practice, they are maleficent. You might ask: why?

These policies failed to utilise the transformative power of corporate accountability through the “polluter pays” principle and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) frameworks, which require manufacturers to manage the environmental and social impacts of their

bridge the data-policy-implementation gap and drive meaningful change.

The final piece of the puzzle is consumer awareness. Consumers have the power to demand sustainable packaging and avoid or support businesses prioritising the environment. International best practices like Germany's bottle deposit scheme, which boasts a 98 percent return rate for empty packaging, demonstrate how consumer-driven solutions can significantly reduce waste. Adapting such practices in Bangladesh could foster a culture of reuse and refill, cutting plastic waste at its source.

A paradigm shift

The dream of a circular plastic economy—where plastics are endlessly reused and recycled—has morphed into a nightmare. Instead, plastics have spread across the planet like a deadly virus, threatening ecosystems and human health. The plastics industry continues to thrive because the true costs—on health, climate and biodiversity—are shifted onto the public.

Real solutions demand nothing less than a systemic overhaul—from redesigning packaging and improving waste management infrastructure to holding producers accountable. We need a complete transformation in how plastics are produced, used and perceived. Transitioning from a disposable culture to a circular economy requires innovative business models, consumer behaviour shifts, and accountability across the entire supply chain. Bans alone won't work—they haven't in the past, and they won't in the future—unless the entirety of plastics use is strictly monitored and regulated. Without such reforms, resistance will grow, progress will stagnate, and we risk replacing meaningful action with superficial greenwashing.

Living in fear



Nazia Adnin is digital distribution lead in Bangladesh for Deutsche Welle (DW), the German national public broadcaster.

NAZIA ADNIN

“We're survivors. We control the fear. And without fear, we are all as good as dead. Do you understand?” These words by Forrest Bondurant, portrayed by Tom Hardy in the movie *Lawless*, resonated with me deeply. The character's philosophy about survival and fear seemed distant and theatrical when I first watched the film. But recently, I lived through my own experience of being “controlled by fear,” and the source of that fear was none other than those entrusted to protect us: our law enforcement agencies.

It began in May last year, when I learnt that members of a law enforcement agency in Bangladesh were investigating my background and my family's political affiliations. To gather this information, they resorted to harassing my mother over the phone.

My crime? I am a journalist working for an international news organisation, Deutsche Welle.

Despite finding nothing suspicious about my family or me, their attempts to intimidate me continued. They even tracked down my former residence, where I hadn't lived in a decade, and contacted the property owner, who now resides in Australia. The intent was clear: to instil fear without directly confronting me.

When I reached out to them, they identified themselves as being from the cantonment and demanded detailed personal information. For a time, their strategy worked. Fear crept into my life, dictating my every move. I worried constantly about being followed, abducted or harassed. Worse, I feared for my family's safety, especially my mother's.

The irony is that I, a law-abiding, tax-paying citizen, had to seek protection from international colleagues and organisations to feel safe in my own country. I had committed no crime, yet I felt like a criminal. The experience made me question whether my dream of working for an international media outlet like Deutsche Welle was worth the emotional toll.

My father, an honest banker who led a simple life, instilled in me the values of integrity and hard work. I have always upheld these principles in my career as a

journalist. But even this wasn't enough to shield me from the harassment. It became evident that the goal wasn't justice or security but control—an attempt to force allegiance through intimidation.

I was being coerced to support the authorities, regardless of my professional or ethical stance. The message was clear: dissent would have consequences.

The shame lies in being treated like a criminal in the country where I was born

Despite finding nothing suspicious about my family or me, their attempts to intimidate me continued. They even tracked down my former residence, where I hadn't lived in a decade, and contacted the property owner, who now resides in Australia. The intent was clear: to instil fear without directly confronting me.

and raised—a country that prides itself on its democratic ideals. Why did I have to live in fear? Why was my mother subjected to mental trauma for something she didn't understand? Who will take responsibility for the stress and fear inflicted upon us?

These questions have haunted me for months, and I fear they will remain unanswered. However, I hold onto hope that as Bangladesh moves forward, this era of living in fear will end. I dream of a future where every citizen, regardless of their profession or affiliations, can live without intimidation—a future where democracy means freedom, not fear.



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

<div>ER ইস্টার্ন রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড</div> <div>EASTERN REFINERY LIMITED</div> <div>(বাংলাদেশ পেট্রোলিয়াম কর্পোরেশন এর একটি অংশ প্রতিষ্ঠান)</div>		
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি		
ইস্টার্ন রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড (ইয়ারএল) এ মেইকেন্দ্র শাখার নিম্নবর্ণিত কাছাসমূহ করার লক্ষ্যে নির্ধারিত সিডিউল এ সীমামোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে-		
১।	সহো	ইস্টার্ন রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড
২।	কার্ভার বিবরণ	ইস্টার্ন রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড এর টপিক ইউনিট সার্ভিসেস-২০২৫ এ প্রায়ের বিভিন্ন পাইপ লাইন পরিবর্তন, ভেলেন ফেব্রিকেশন, প্রোটেক্ট মোরামেন্ট এবং ফার্নেল টিউব পরিবর্তন ও ফার্নেল টিউবের ওয়েল্ডিং টেস্ট ইত্যাদি কাজ।
৩।	দরপত্র সূত্র নং ও তারিখ	২৮.২৫.০০০০.১৩১.৩১.০০১.২৫, তারিখ: ১৩/০১/২০২৫ খ্রিঃ
৪।	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি
৫।	কার্বনস্ট্যান্ডার্ডের শাখা	মেইকেন্দ্র শাখা
৬।	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১৮/০২/২০২৫ খ্রিঃ, বিকাল ১৭ঃ০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত
৭।	দরপত্র জমা দেওয়ার শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১৮/০২/২০২৫ খ্রিঃ, সকাল ১১ঃ০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত
৮।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	১৯/০২/২০২৫ খ্রিঃ, সকাল ১১ঃ১৫ ঘটিকা
৯।	দরপত্র বিক্রয়কারী অফিস	ক) একএন্ডএ ভিকিটসের এ্যাসিস্টেন্ট ম্যানেজার (একাকটস), ইস্টার্ন রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড, উত্তর পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম-৪২০৪। খ) ইয়ারএল লিয়ারো অফিস, ১/১ পাইওনিয়ার রোড, ওয়াইএমসিএ ভবন (৩য় তলা), কারবাইল, ঢাকা-১০০০।
১০।	দরপত্র জমা দেওয়ার স্থান	এ্যাসিস্টেন্ট ম্যানেজার ম্যানেজার (মেইকেন্দ্র) এর অফিস কক্ষ, প্রধান কার্যালয়, ইয়ারএল, উত্তর পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম-৪২০৪।
১১।	দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	জেনারেল, ইয়ারএল রোডস্টার্ট বিল্ডিং, প্রধান কার্যালয়, ইয়ারএল, উত্তর পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম-৪২০৪।
১২।	দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের যোগ্যতা	ট্রেড লাইসেন্সধারী হতে হবে, ট্রেড লাইসেন্স (সদা সন্মতব্যকৃত) এর সত্যায়িত কপি দাখিল করতে হবে। যুক্ত শিল্প কারখানার প্রসেস গ্রাউন্ডে এ ধরনের কার্যের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে এবং অভিজ্ঞতার সনদের কপি দরপত্রে সার্ভে প্রদান করতে হবে।
১৩।	দরপত্রের মূল্য	১১,৫০০/= (এক হাজার পঁচাত্তর) টাকা মাত্র (অক্ষরহরফে)।
১৪।	দরপত্রের সিডিউলটি মানি বা জামানত	৬০০,০০০/= (ছাশি হাজার) টাকা মাত্র (সেফরহরফে)।
১৫।	কার্ভার সম্পন্ন করার সময়কাল	৩০ (ত্রিশ) দিন
১৬।	কার্বাইল	সাত ডায়েরের সম্মুখ সময়কাল নভেম্বর-২০২৫ হতে ডিসেম্বর-২০২৫ পর্যন্ত।
১৭।	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী	প্রকৌশলী মুর্তজা হাসান, ম্যানেজার (মেইকেন্দ্র), ইস্টার্ন রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড, উত্তর পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম-৪২০৪, ফোনঃ ০২ ৩৩৩৩ ০১২৬০-৭, এক্সটেনশন-৩৩১।
অনিবার্য কারণবশত নির্ধারিত দিনে দরপত্র খোলা সম্ভব না হলে পরবর্তী কার্যদিনে একই সময়ে তা গ্রহণ ও খোলা হবে। কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ প্রদর্শন ছাড়াই সর্বান্ন দরপত্র গ্রহণ না করার বা যে কোন কিংবা সকল দরপত্র বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।		
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AN UNTOLD HISTORY OF BENGALI Migrants in Malaya and Singapore

A sizeable Bengali diaspora became visible in British Malaya during the late nineteenth century. It gradually created social and cultural spaces alongside other migrating communities, such as the Chinese, Tamils, and Burmese.

GAZI MIZANUR RAHMAN

During the 1980s and 1990s, a new wave of Bangladeshi migrants, comprising mainly unskilled workers, led to a widespread perception of Bengali migrants as itinerant labourers and temporary workers in the Malay Peninsula. However, one may ask: Did Bengalis not migrate to the Malay world before the 1980s? The answer to this question can be found on every page of the book *In the Malay World: A Spatial History of a Bengali Transnational Community*, published by Cambridge University Press. Despite the significant historical mobility of Bengalis in the Malay Archipelago and their contemporary prominence, as reflected in the more than a million-strong Bengali diaspora in the region, their historical studies remain almost

a hierarchy with four harbour managers representing Gujaratis, Bengalis, Malays, and East Asians. The Portuguese and Dutch East India Companies colonised Malacca in 1511 and 1641, respectively. Malacca was ceded to the British in 1824 through the Anglo-Dutch Treaty.

With the arrival of Europeans in the Bay of Bengal waters, Bengalis were introduced to Malaya through various avenues, including enslavement and later as imperial subjects. Europeans integrated Bengali enslaved people into the global slave-trading network. During the 1620s, the Dutch frequently visited Chittagong to purchase Bengali enslaved people captured by the marauding Portuguese, known as Feringhi. It is estimated that approximately 100,000 enslaved people, and possibly more, were taken by the Dutch from various regions, including the Bengal-Arakan border. The Dutch employed them as domestic servants or agricultural labourers in their colonies.

Colonial Connectivity and Bengali Mobility

With the establishment of the British colonial administration and trans-regional networks in the 1830s, Bengali mobility into the Malay world took a relatively stable form. The maritime Bay of Bengal and land routes became robust avenues of mutual communication between 1830 and 1851. During this period, the Straits Settlements (consisting of Penang, Malacca, and Singapore) were administered from Calcutta. In the following years, the Straits Settlements came under the direct control of the Governor-General of India, an arrangement that continued until it became a crown colony in 1867. Moreover, the print media of



PHOTO COURTESY: GAZI MIZANUR RAHMAN.

Mushahid Ali (b. 1941), a Bangladeshi descendant.

transition from one sector to another, where they met other Bengali workers.

“We came from Taltala Village under Balagonj police station in Sylhet. My father, Munshi Asmat Ali, and my uncle Muniruddin came to British Malaya in 1922. They worked in unskilled jobs along the west coast of Malaya; from Penang, they went to Batu Gajah in Perak to seek work in the tin mines as boilermen or engine drivers. Eventually, they went to Ampang, Selangor, where there were other people from East Bengal, particularly Sylhet. They worked there for a while before moving south to Johor. While Asmat Ali found work as a boilerman in Kota Tinggi at Sungei Besi Tin Mine, Muniruddin went to Singapore in 1939 to seek work at the British military base and eventually settled there. In those days, the British encouraged the people of Sylhet to come to Malaya.”

Mushahid Ali, son of Munshi Asmat Ali (1893–1982), was born and grew up in Johor. He moved to Singapore in 1949 to pursue better education. After finishing college, he started working as a reporter for a newspaper and later worked at Radio Television Singapore from 1963 to 1966. He resumed his studies at the University of Singapore in 1966, graduated, and eventually joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He served as a diplomat in seven countries, including Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, England, Japan, and Cambodia, and retired in 2001. Presently, he is working as a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University. His three offspring work

Tamils, and Burmese. Mirza Abdul Majid (1906–1973), commonly known as M. A. Majid, was a towering figure among the Bengali diasporic community in the Malay world. He migrated from Sylhet to Singapore in the 1920s and married a Chinese woman. He was well-known in Singapore's public life and had good connections with colonial administrators. In 1938, M. A. Majid took steps to secure the interests of the working classes, including the Bengalis. He noted the grievances, injustices, and unemployment faced by Bengali seamen in Malaya. He urged foreign shipowners to improve the working conditions of Asian seamen. In the 1930s, more than 60 per cent of Bengali lascars remained unemployed indefinitely in Singapore, and the Master Attendants' Office was indifferent to their grievances.

In her oral testimony, Shafiya Khatoon recalls how Majid and his Chinese wife became a key example of a transnational family in the Malay Peninsula. Majid and his wife, Hamidah Binte Abdullah Sani, had ten offspring. In 1965, the eldest daughter of Majid, Khatoon, married Kamsani Hasan, a mixed Malay. Hasan's father was an Indonesian Malay, and his mother was a Bruneian who had a connection to the Brunei royal family by marriage. Hasan's maternal aunt, Mrs. Kadayang Amas Ampuan Salleh (commonly known in the family as Maskatun), was the first wife of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin (the twenty-seventh Sultan of Brunei Darussalam). Khatoon visited her husband's relatives in Brunei on several occasions from 1969 onward. Hasan had a close connection with

government system in Singapore. After the Legislative Council election in 1948, Majid formed a political party, the Singapore Labour Party (SLP), to protect labourers' interests. He was the 'principal organiser' of the party. Majid had good connections with prominent contemporary politicians, including David Marshall, Tengku Abdur Rahman, and Lim Yew Hock. They used to visit Majid's house and discuss contemporary political issues in British Malaya.

Mrs. Hena Sinha was born and brought up in Burma. After her marriage, A. C. Sinha and Mrs. Sinha, along with her mother-in-law, disembarked from Rangoon Port for Singapore. Her daughter-in-law, Dolly Sinha Davenport, recollected her married life and described her transnational family in the following words:

“I have three offspring. Ranjit was the father of two kids. One kid is with Davenport [after the death of Ranjit, Mrs. Sinha married Brand Davenport]. My eldest daughter is settled in the USA. She got married to an American who had two sons. My son, Robin Sinha, is a doctor, settled in Singapore, and married a Chinese girl. The youngest daughter, Roya, is settled in Singapore.... She got married to a boy who is mixed-race, mother Chinese and father Irish. Brand [her second husband] was an Anglo-Indian. His father was pure English, and his mother was mixed-race.”

During the postcolonial period, Dolly Sinha was popular among Bangladeshi migrants. She completed her Bar-at-Law in 1977 and practised at the Singapore Court for nineteen years. She opened a law firm named Dolly Sinha Davenport and Co. She recalls that when she was practising law in the 1980s, people called her office the 'Little Bangladesh High Commission' because most of the injured or maltreated Bengali workers came to her office for legal assistance.

Bengali Associations and their Religious and Cultural Activities

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Bengali diaspora had formed various social, religious, and cultural associations. The Bengali Hindu and Muslim communities established several associations and initiated many social, religious, and cultural activities during the interwar period in British Malaya. The Malayan Bengalee Association (MBA), one of the earliest Bengali associations, began functioning in Malaya in the 1920s. Its members came from the same ethnic group and language. Fresh Bengali migrants and the descendants of those who had arrived mainly from Calcutta, Dacca, Chittagong, and Midnapore were also members of the MBA. In 1952, the MBA was formally registered, and H. K. Choudhury was its first elected President (1951–1956). After the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the MBA renamed itself the 'Malaysian Bengalee Association'.

Bengali Muslim migrants and their descendants founded the Bangiya Moslem Sammilani (the Bengal Muslim Association) in Singapore in the 1920s. The Sammilani organised various social and religious events and programmes. In 1935, they celebrated the silver jubilee of George V (1865–1936) at Rangoon Road in Singapore with a three-day-long programme. Most of the participants were Bengali lascars, merchants, and seamen. Doa selamat (prayers) was offered for the king and his empire at the Queen Street Mosque on the first day. A Bangla music concert was held on the second day, and on the last day, a special dinner was served at M. A. Majid's house, who was the secretary of the Sammilani. More than 150 guests attended the dinner. Majid wrote a congratulatory message to the Viceroy of India at this event.

Though the Bengalis from West Bengal of India and Bangladesh share common cultures, including language and food habits, they split into two communities in Malaysia and Singapore in the late 1970s. The primary reason for this separation was the independence of Bangladesh, which divided the Bangla-speaking community along national lines.

Based on a range of primary sources, including oral history interviews, the book reveals an untold history of transregional connectivity between South and Southeast Asia and the making of a diasporic space that vividly resonates today. It fills a gap in the existing historiography of Bengali historical migration and their space-making in present day Malaysia and Singapore.

Gazi Mizanur Rahman is an assistant professor of history at BRAC University, Bangladesh, with expertise in historical migration.



Muniruddin and his wife.

PHOTO COURTESY: GAZI MIZANUR RAHMAN.



M A Majid and his wife.

PHOTO COURTESY: FAZLUR RAHMAN KAMSANI, GRANDSON OF M A MAJID.

During the postcolonial period, Dolly Sinha was popular among Bangladeshi migrants. She completed her Bar-at-Law in 1977 and practised at the Singapore Court for nineteen years. She opened a law firm named Dolly Sinha Davenport and Co. She recalls that when she was practising law in the 1980s, people called her office the 'Little Bangladesh High Commission' because most of the injured or maltreated Bengali workers came to her office for legal assistance.

unseen. Three aspects are significant in examining the history of Bengali migration and their transnational community. The first aspect includes the background of Bengali migration, processes, and governance during the colonial period. The second set of issues addresses the identity of Bengalis among many Indian ethnic communities, their demographic profile, and the historical challenges and opportunities they faced. Thirdly, the contributions of Bengalis to the Malay world's economy, culture, and civil society, as well as their role in forming a cosmopolitan space in the Northeast Indian Ocean region.

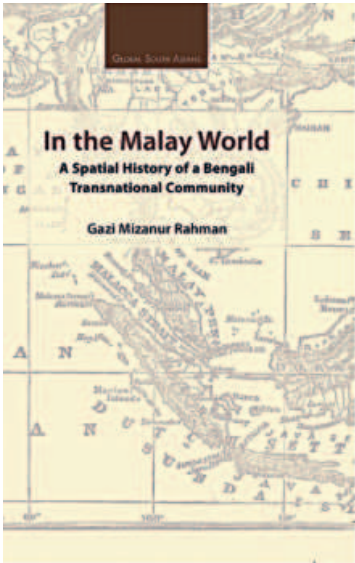
Pre-colonial Trajectory Across the Bay of Bengal and the Malay Sea

“A thousand years have I been roaming the world's pathways/ From Ceylon to Malaya in the darkness of night across oceans/ Much have I travelled; in the grey universe of Bimbisara, Ashoka A moment or two of peace she gave me, Nature's Banalata Sen” ('Banalata Sen', a poem by Jibanananda Das, translated by Sugata Bose).

Jibanananda Das, a leading Bengali poet of the twentieth century, never travelled to the Malay Peninsula. However, in an allegorical verse in his famous poem 'Banalata Sen', an ode to the eponymous eternal woman, Das expressed that he had travelled for thousands of years from Sri Lanka to the Malay world to attain a moment of peace. His literary mind knew no bounds. Though his journey was a fantasy of love, it gives us a sense of the constant flow of Bengali mobility and culture between the two coasts of the Bay of Bengal and the Malay Sea. Factually, Bengalis voyaged to the Malay Archipelago for a thousand years. This truth fuelled the imagination of Bengali poets, as reflected in Das's verse.

Bengali connections with the Malay world go back centuries. Bengalis have been travelling widely in Southeast Asia since about the third century BCE. During the pre-colonial era, the primary connections were the circulation of goods and ideas. Chittagong port was prominent for trade and cultural dissemination. Anthony Reid and R. C. Majumder have shown that Buddhism and Islam were disseminated from Bengal to Southeast Asia. Majumder and Ganguly suggested that Bengal was extensively involved in developing cultural links between the diverse civilisations of Eastern and Southeastern Asia for nearly 1,500 years. In this respect, Chittagong and Malacca ports were crucial in exchanging cultures and commodities.

Bengali merchants conducted business in the Malay Peninsula and assisted in managing the Malacca Port at some point. A Malay nobleman, Parameswara (1344–c. 1414), established the Malacca Sultanate and founded a port in 1400. To avoid petty corruption, he established

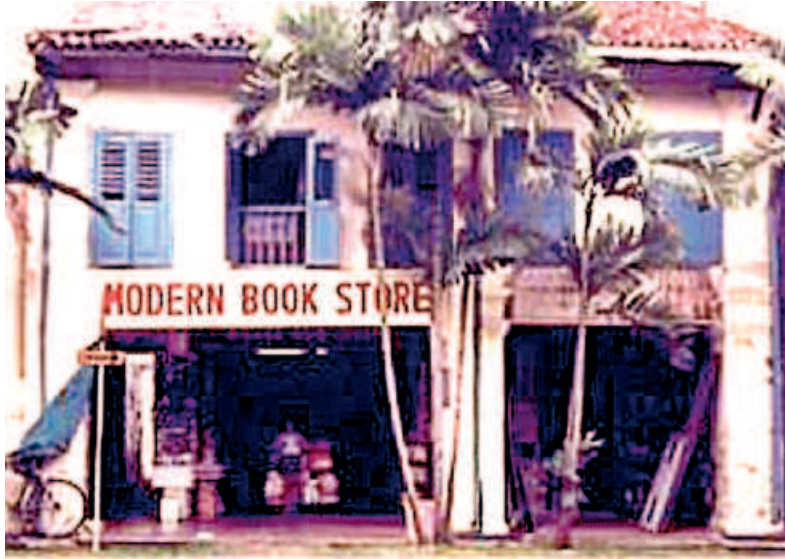


the Straits Settlements offered 'soft' connectivity by either publishing news from Bengal or reproducing reports from Bengal newspapers.

However, a particular issue that has been encountered relates to identifying Bengalis among other South Asian migrants. Colonial records refer to migrants from different parts of South Asia using generic terms such as 'Indian', 'native of India', 'eastern Indian', and, to some extent, 'aliens' and 'others'. The term 'Bengali' was bundled with non-Bengalis, such as 'Sikh', 'Hindustani', or 'Punjabi'. Such terminological and categorical ambiguities about Bengalis hinder the remaking of the history of Bengali migration. Bengalis provide examples of mobility as convicts, indentured or kangany labourers, and 'free' migrants under British imperialism. Both colonial governments in Bengal and the Straits Settlements regulated Bengali migrations.

Governance of Migration and Bengali Professionals

British Malaya was rich in tin, rubber, coffee, oil, and other minerals, creating job opportunities and drawing a multiracial group of people from neighbouring areas, including China, India, and Bengal. Bengalis were involved in both professional and non-professional jobs during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For instance, they worked as clerks, doctors, lawyers, accountants, coolies, shopkeepers, boatmen, security guards, vendors (bread-sellers), and lascars. Bengali specialists in obstetrics and gynaecology served with dedication in British Malaya. K. C. Sinha migrated from Calcutta to Singapore in 1912 and joined as a general practitioner at Kandang Kerbau Maternity Hospital. His son and grandson became prominent obstetricians and gynaecologists in Singapore. Members of the Sinha family served at the Kandang Kerbau Maternity Hospital for almost fifty years. Mushahid Ali, a descendant of a Bengali migrant, recalls his family's involvement in tin mining and their



Modern Book Store, 1939.

PHOTO COURTESY: NOORUL ISLAM.

in Singapore and the USA.

In his travel account, Ramnath Biswas, a globetrotter who started peddling his bicycle from Singapore in the 1930s, wrote about a Bengali grocery shop in Seremban, where Bengali migrants used to gather. According to Anwarul Haque's oral testimony, his father, Muniruddin, was an electrician and a supplier of electrical equipment in the Serangoon area. After the Second World War, Muniruddin's family resided in a shophouse on Bras Basah Road that served as both a home and a trading centre.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Bengalis owned a few bookshops. For instance, Noorul Islam's father started a bookshop named 'Modern Book Store' around 1938, located near Muniruddin's electrical equipment store.

The Making of a Diasporic Space: Socio-political Dimensions and Civil Society

A sizeable Bengali diaspora became visible in British Malaya during the late nineteenth century. It gradually created social and cultural spaces alongside other migrating communities, such as the Chinese,

his three maternal cousins, namely Y. A. M. Pengiran Anak Datin Seri Setia Hjhi Siti Saerah Al-Marhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin (Belabab Basar, 1928–2013), Y. A. M. Pg Anak Siti Zubaidah Al-Marhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin (Belabab Tangah, c. 1932–1986), and Y. A. M. Pengiran Anak Datin Seri Setia Hajah Siti Halimah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin (Belabab Damit, 1935–2009). Khatoon attended the wedding of Saerah, the daughter of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin, at Darul Hana (Old Royal Palace) and her funeral. The twenty-ninth Sultan of Brunei Darussalam also attended the janazah (funeral) prayer for Saerah.

M. A. Majid was not a trained solicitor, but he had knowledge of various legal issues and helped seamen and others in the court of Singapore. After WWII, Majid transitioned into national politics and stood in municipal commissioner and legislative councillor elections. In 1948, two candidates from the Progressive Party and Majid, an independent candidate, contested the Municipal South-West constituency in the first Legislative Council election. Majid endeavoured to achieve a self-



Is this it for Shakib?

SHABAB CHOWDHURY

“The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry,” is a line penned by Scottish poet Robert Burns around 250 years ago. It was the poet’s personal take on how even the most meticulously planned scenarios get overturned by the cruel hand of fate.

It’s unclear whether Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is familiar with this quote, but after his omission from Bangladesh’s squad for the ICC Champions Trophy, where he had planned to call time on his career, he is definitely experiencing the truth of the sentiment behind this line.

The Champions Trophy, starting on February 19 in Karachi, was meant to be the 37-year-old’s ODI swansong as said by the all-rounder himself in an interview before the 2023 World Cup. But unforeseen events have now removed him from that event where he almost single-handedly ensured Bangladesh’s qualification.

Had Shakib not timed out Angelo Mathews in Bangladesh’s 2023 World Cup encounter

against Sri Lanka in Delhi and also put forth a match-winning all-round display, featuring figures of 2/57 with the ball and a 65-ball 82 with the bat, Bangladesh, who climbed to eighth and edged Sri Lanka and the Netherlands on a better run-rate after the win, would not have qualified for the prestigious event.

Shakib has not played an ODI since that World Cup match and the last time he represented Bangladesh was in September 2024 in a two-match Test series against India. He had announced his T20I retirement last year.

His involvement with the ousted Awami League government has kept him from returning to Bangladesh. The bowling ban imposed on him by the ICC made it easier for the national selectors to drop him, as they found it difficult to rope him into the side solely as a batter.

Shakib, whose bowling action was reported as suspicious in September 2023 in a County Cricket match in England, failed his bowling test for a second time last Thursday.

“He can play as a batter as he has failed the bowling test [relating to his action]. We have considered him as a batter while making up the squad but due to the constraints brought forth due to the team combinations, we could not include him,” chief selector Gazi Ashraf Lipu confirmed in Mirpur yesterday.

But the question is why would the selectors even consider him as a sole batter? The uncertainty regarding him being able to play matches at home coupled with the fact that he has not played any of the 12 ODIs the Tigers have played since the 2023 World Cup should have been enough to look towards the future.

The BCB also confirmed yesterday that Shakib can retake the bowling test as many times as he wants. Does that mean if Shakib passes the next test, he will be back in consideration as an all-rounder?

The BCB can make changes to the squad till next month. So, is there another twist around the corner or have we seen the last of Shakib in national colours?



Capitals make BPL records tumble

- 🏏 Dhaka Capitals’ 254-1 against Durbar Rajshahi yesterday is the highest team total in BPL history, beating Rangpur Riders’ 239-4 against Chattogram Vikings in 2019.
- 🏏 Liton hit his maiden T20 ton off 44 balls -- the fastest by a Bangladeshi in BPL and also the joint-fastest hundred in BPL alongside Chris Gayle (for Barisal Burners against Sylhet Royals in 2012).
- 🏏 Liton and Tanzid Tamim’s 241-run opening partnership is the highest in BPL for any wicket. It is also the highest opening stand in any franchise-based T20 tournament, surpassing the previous best of Quinton de Kock and KL Rahul’s unbeaten 210 in an IPL game in 2022.
- 🏏 Tamim became the second Bangladeshi after Tamim Iqbal to score two centuries in BPL.
- 🏏 Liton’s unbeaten 125 off 55 is the second highest by a Bangladeshi batter in BPL - Tamim Iqbal’s 61-ball 141 for Comilla Victorians against Dhaka Dynamites in 2019 is the highest.

Liton left out as Bangladesh bet on form, youthful aggression

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced the squad for the upcoming Champions Trophy, with the exclusion of batter Liton Das standing out as the main talking point.

While Liton’s recent poor form made his omission less surprising, Bangladesh’s selection trends often leave room for debate about inclusions and exclusions. This time, the selectors leaned towards youthful confidence and aggression over experience.

Chief selector Gazi Ashraf Lipu had sound logic for why Liton did not inspire much confidence ahead of squad selection. His run drought was the obvious reason; the other was that the selection panel saw the Soumya Sarkar-Tanzid Tamim pair as the likely opening combination for the tournament, starting February 19.

Since 2023, Liton’s form has taken a dip and the manner of his dismissals has been quite similar. He was a big cause for optimism in the 2023 ODI World Cup in India but failed to live up to expectations. After the marquee event, Liton’s ODI form deteriorated further, reaching a nadir in the last five ODIs where he managed just six runs.

The recent ODI series in the West Indies, played on flat wickets, eventually sealed Liton’s fate.

“Obviously his past history was considered, but recent history was more in consideration,” Lipu said yesterday,



BANGLADESH SQUAD

Najmul Hossain Shanto (C), Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Soumya Sarkar, Tanzid Tamim, Parvez Emon, Mushfiqur Rahim, Towhid Hridoy, Mahmudullah, Jaker Ali, Rishad Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Nasum Ahmed, Tanzim Sakib, Nahid Rana.

“If you look at the team, there is huge competition.”

BCB chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu

adding that opposition analysts have been increasingly successful with their plans against Liton in white-ball formats.

“In the Windies, we scored runs and crossed 300 twice. The wicket was very good, and since Liton failed there too, it was difficult to keep our confidence in him,” he said.

The argument is that batting-friendly surfaces are likely to be prepared for the global tournament, and a top-order batter still struggling with form cannot provide the required start.

Curiously, Parvez Hossain Emon has been picked as a backup opener. He is

yet to make his ODI debut and averages 12.57 in seven T20Is. In his last T20I, Emon got the team off to a flying start in the West Indies. It was his attacking approach that was considered.

“Maybe he doesn’t have a huge contribution. But what we felt, what we were looking for, is aggressive batting in the Powerplay, which we saw in him,” Lipu said of Emon.

However, the squad faces a lack of experience. With Tamim Iqbal retired and Shakib Al Hasan and Liton absent, the top order relies on individuals -- such as Soumya Sarkar, Tanzid Tamim,

skipper Najmul Shanto, and Tawhid Hridoy -- who are also battling form issues.

“Experience obviously has a lot of value, but our players have gathered enough confidence from A team and HP tours. When you are young, there is an advantage in being more aggressive, eager to take challenges. It can also work against them, but some excitement will be there,” Lipu said.

“If you look at the team, there is huge competition,” he added.

Liton, however, appeared to be regaining form in dramatic fashion in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League. Playing for Dhaka Capitals in their match against Durbar Rajshahi yesterday, Liton scored the joint-second fastest century and the quickest by a Bangladeshi player in BPL history, reaching the landmark in 44 balls before ending up unbeaten on 125 off 55 balls.

He also forged BPL’s highest-ever partnership and the highest-ever opening stand in T20s, combining with Tanzid Tamim (108 off 64 balls) for a colossal 241 runs, leading to a BPL record team total of 254-1.

Selector Hannan Sarkar told The Daily Star on Sunday that they will be able to make changes to the Tigers’ squad in the next month. Therefore, it remains to be seen whether Liton’s form, if it continues, will bring him into consideration for the Champions Trophy in the end.

Strikers turn it around in Sylhet

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN *from Sylhet*

Sylhet Strikers had a woeful start in this year’s Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) as they lost their opening three matches and two of them were in front of their crazy home fans at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

BPL isn’t a kind of tournament where home and away system is followed as only three venues -- Dhaka, Sylhet and Chattogram -- are used to host the matches of the seven different franchises, each named after different divisions.

But like in previous years, fans in Sylhet are leaving no stone unturned in showing their support for the team named after their city, and for the past week and so, from galleries to roads and hotels to restaurants, Sylhet people were seen talking about their team’s underwhelming performance.

Sylhet played their first three games against tournament favourites Rangpur Riders (two games) and Fortune Barishal (one) and as expected both teams are currently leading the points table. But since they started to play against similar-strength teams, they took no time to get results -- leading to fans turning up in large numbers in every Sylhet game to cheer for their side.

On Sunday, Sylhet registered their second successive victory in the tournament when they beat Khulna Tigers by eight runs in a hard-fought contest and the victory came within 48 hours after they beat Dhaka Capitals by three wickets to open their account.

“When you play at home, there is a plus point as well as a negative point. I think the fans [of Sylhet Strikers] have so much emotion for their side and that’s why they get upset and when we play well, they say good things. I think it’s good because players also remain very energetic because of it,” said Sylhet skipper Ariful Haque, who was criticised heavily by the Sylheti fans for his poor captaincy at the start of the campaign.

Habib makes history for Lebanon

AFP, Melbourne

Lebanon’s Hady Habib made history Sunday at the Australian Open by becoming the first player from his country to win a Grand Slam match.

World number 219 Habib is the only Lebanese ever, man or woman, to come through qualifying and reach the main draw at one of the four majors.

The 26-year-old continued his fairytale run with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) victory over China’s Bu Yunchaokete in front of a frenzied crowd out on Court 13.

He was draped in the Lebanon flag as he signed autographs after the match.

“This is probably one of the best days of my career honestly,” said Habib.

“It’s such an incredible feeling to get this win not only for myself but for Lebanon and Lebanese tennis.

“As you guys could see there, the crowd was absolutely wild. It made it even more special to win in front of them.”

Born in America to a Lebanese father, Habib lived in Lebanon for a few years from the age of six and has been representing the country since he was 15 when he first played in the Davis Cup.



Habib also wore the Lebanon colours proudly at last year’s Paris Olympics where he lost in the first round to Carlos Alcaraz.

“There were definitely more people at the Alcaraz match,” smiled Habib.

“I think there were more Lebanese people today, so it felt a little more special. The support I’ve been getting these last couple days has been incredible. My phone has been absolutely blowing up.

“I actually have some family from Sydney that came out to watch. It’s been a special time for me to have all the Lebanese people join in the community,” he added.

“Yeah, I felt the energy out there.”

His reward is a second-round match against France’s 14th seed Ugo Humbert.

“It’s a huge win, especially what we’ve been going through as a country,” said Habib.

“I think to bring something positive, especially we’ve been having a rough time with obviously the war. We had our other issues in the past. It’s just nice to get this win for Lebanon and for the people.

“This is the biggest achievement I’ve had in my entire career.”

Sabalenka wants to ‘keep winning’

REUTERS, Melbourne

Aryna Sabalenka launched her bid for a third successive Australian Open title with a storm of power hitting and a 6-3, 6-2 demolition of former US Open champion Sloane Stephens on Sunday.

It was by no means peak Sabalenka, with the world number one broken twice by the American in a wayward first set at Rod Laver Arena.

But on the same court where she hoisted the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup twice in two years, Sabalenka steadied with the help of her pulverising forehand to claim a 15th successive win at hardcourt Grand Slams.

“It’s just an incredible feeling. I just want to keep winning as long as I can just to feel the atmosphere,” Sabalenka said.

The stand-out hardcourt player in the women’s game, Sabalenka stormed to a 4-0 lead over Stephens in the first set as fans were still settling in their seats.

Though Stephens broke her twice to claw back to 4-3, Sabalenka regrouped to claim the set with strong net play and customary aggression.

A few years ago, Sabalenka might have lost her head after surrendering a few games but she is now a different player. “In that moment I would get frustrated and probably would lose the first set,” she told reporters.

“I’m really glad that I improved my mental toughness, let’s say.”



PHOTO: AFP



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DRAFT CYBER PROTECTION LAW Women, children and minorities given back seat Speakers say at an event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The newly approved Cyber Protection Ordinance-2024 largely neglects minorities, women and children, and the indigenous groups, speakers said at an event yesterday.

They also said the draft law was merely a rebranded version of the draconian Cyber Security Act 2023.

The issues were discussed at a views-exchange meeting titled "Proposed Cyber Protection Ordinance 2024", organised by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) in association with the Institute of Informatics and Development, Cyberteens Foundation and Safety Net, at the capital's Biswa Sahitya Kendra.

Supreme Court lawyer Abdullah Al Noman said the new ordinance fails to address sexual harassment of women and children in the digital space, adding that it does not clearly outline how sensitive issues should be handled or tried.

During the July uprising, as many as 250 fake accounts were created in the name of Safety Nets member Farzana Shithi.

Speaking at the event, Shithi said that people impersonating her extorted money from others, adding that AI-generated images of her were used in various TikTok videos.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Protesting Friday night's attack on two fellow traders by armed criminals, shop owners and employees demonstrated in front of the Multiplan Centre in the capital's Elephant Road around noon yesterday. Adviser Asif Mahmud is seen arriving at the scene. He assured them of security and justice following which the trades withdrew. Story on page 1.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

EC thinking about nat'l polls only

Says Election Commissioner
Md Sanaullah

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission is focused on the national polls, and not any other election, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (Retd) Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah said yesterday.

"I would like to say categorically that our overall focus is on the national election.... Any event that may hamper the national election should not come before," he told reporters at the Nirbachan Bhavan in the capital after a meeting of the commission, chaired by Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin.

Sanaullah said this as a response to whether the EC will hold local polls as a test run before the next national election.

"It's not possible to conduct all

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Tk 2,300cr anomaly found at Nagad Says BB governor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank has so far uncovered irregularities amounting to Tk 2,300 crore at the controversial digital financial service provider Nagad.

The irregularities include unauthorised creation of Tk 600 crore in e-money and misappropriation of funds intended for social safety net programmes for the poor, said BB Governor Ahsan H Mansur at a seminar yesterday on the digital financial ecosystem.

After the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 last year, the central bank has taken over the operations of Nagad, a big beneficiary of the previous regime, with the objective of improving governance and handing it over to a new investor who will operate it properly.

An audit of Nagad's past activities is underway, and once it is completed, the digital financial service provider will be offered to interested parties, Mansur said at the event jointly organised by the Metropolitan

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Strong winds threaten to spread LA inferno

Death toll rises to 16; looting reported in affected areas

AFP, Los Angeles

US officials warned "dangerous and strong" winds were set to push deadly wildfires further through Los Angeles residential areas yesterday as firefighters struggled to make progress against the flames.

At least 16 people have been confirmed dead from blazes that have ripped through the city, reducing whole neighbourhoods to ashes and leaving thousands without homes.

Despite massive efforts, including precision sorties from aerial crews, the Palisades Fire continued to grow, spreading east towards the priceless collections of the Getty Center art museum and north to the densely populated San Fernando Valley.

"The winds are potentially getting dangerous and strong again," Deanne Criswell, head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), told CNN.

"The biggest thing that people need to know is that this is still dangerous."

A brief lull in the wind gave way to gusts that forecasters warned could reach up to 50 miles per hour (80 kilometers per hour) early yesterday, and feed the blazes for days to come.

The winds were due to weaken later yesterday

before picking up again overnight, the National Weather Service said.

The Palisades Fire was 11 percent contained but had grown to 23,600 acres (9,500 hectares), while the Eaton Fire was at 14,000 acres and 15 percent contained.

Official figures show more than 12,000 structures burned, though Cal Fire's Todd Hopkins said not all were houses and the number included outbuildings, trailers and sheds.

In some areas, the ferocious fire left streaks of molten metal flowing from burnt-out cars.

The sudden rush of evacuated people needing somewhere to live posed a growing problem for the city.

"I'm back on the market with tens of thousands of people," said a man who gave his name as Brian, whose rent-controlled apartment has burned. "That doesn't bode well."

With incidences of looting and a nighttime curfew in place, police and National Guard mounted checkpoints to prevent people getting into the disaster zones.

Two people were arrested near Vice President Kamala Harris's Brentwood house for violating the curfew order after police received reports of burglary.



DMCH doctor freed after payment of ransom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A doctor at the neurosurgery department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) returned home early yesterday after being released by kidnappers in exchange for Tk 1.3 lakh ransom.

Aminur Rahman, 40, from Kachuti village in Kalihati upazila of Tangail, was abducted at 6:00pm on Saturday while returning home from Gazipur's Sreepur. He was freed around 4:00am yesterday near a spot between Hotapara and Rajendrapur in Gazipur. He had injury marks all over his body, according to family members.

Speaking to The Daily Star around noon, Sreepur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Joyal Abedin Mandal said, "We have been informed by the family that the doctor returned home after a ransom was paid."

According to Aminur's cousin Syed Moazzem Hossain Milton, the kidnappers made repeated contact with the family until 3:00am and extorted the ransom in several rounds. They later abandoned Aminur, leaving him injured.

Before releasing him, the abductors took his credit card, two

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



Just hours after being snubbed from Bangladesh's squad for the upcoming Champions Trophy, Liton Das smashed a statement ton for Dhaka Capitals in their Bangladesh Premier League game against Durbar Rajshahi in Sylhet yesterday. Liton hit an unbeaten 55-ball 125, setting the record for the fastest ton by a Bangladeshi in the competition by reaching his maiden T20 hundred off just 44 deliveries, while his opening partner Tanzid Tamim scored a 64-ball 108. The duo stitched a 241-run opening stand -- the highest for any wicket in franchise-based T20s -- as Dhaka amassed 254 for one -- also the highest team total in the tournament's history -- to thrash Rajshahi by a record BPL margin of 149 runs. The previous highest win margin was a 119-run win by Chittagong Kings over Sylhet Royals in 2013.

PHOTO: STAR

1 dies as BNP factions clash in Kishoreganj

36 injured in BNP-
Jamaat clashes in
Jhenaidah, Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

A local BNP leader was killed and five people injured during a factional clash in Kishoreganj's Tarail upazila yesterday.

The incident happened in Banail Bazar of Rauti union around 11:00am. Deceased Abul Hasan, 55, was the president of BNP's Rauti union unit. Five people were also injured in the clash, said Sohel Mia, the officer-in-charge (OC) of Tarail Police Station.

According to locals and party sources, the violence stemmed from a disagreement over the draft list of councillors for the upcoming Tarail upazila BNP council on January 15.

They said on Saturday a meeting was called in Rauti to discuss the councillors' list. During the meeting, Abul Hasan and Ghias Uddin, a member of the union BNP, got into an argument over who would be on the list. The dispute escalated into a clash the next morning.

"The injured were taken to the Tarail Upazila Health Complex. Abul Hasan was declared dead on arrival," the OC said.

Shamim Mia, nephew of the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6