



Ukraine launches big strikes on Russian cities
P7



It's time our youth used their right to information
P8



How Trump's resurgence could affect the global order
P9



Dhaka clubs' ultimatum to BCBC
P11

BFIU CRACKDOWN AFTER AUG 5

Tk 15,000cr of 366 people, entities frozen

Accounts of Hasina, family, Salman F Rahman, S Alam among them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The bank accounts of 366 individuals and entities with a Tk 15,000 crore combined balance were frozen between August and December last year over money laundering allegations.

The accounts were frozen against 112 cases, The Daily Star has learned from officials of the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) directly involved with the process.

Following the fall of the Awami League government, the anti-money laundering unit sprang into action and started to ask banks to freeze the accounts of politically exposed persons and large businesses due to their alleged involvement in money laundering and corruption.

About 225 investigation reports, including those about suspicious transactions, were sent to the police's Criminal Investigation Department and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in August-December.

The frozen bank accounts include those of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy and daughter Saima Wazed Putul, Hasina's sister Sheikh Rehana and Rehana's son Radwan Mujib Siddiq.

Also frozen were the accounts of controversial business
SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



People wait for an OMS truck in the morning cold near Surma market in Sylhet city to buy essentials at subsidised prices. The low-income people start gathering there to collect the OMS products like rice and flour from 5:00am every day. The demand for affordable food is on the rise due to soaring prices of essentials.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

JULY PROCLAMATION

Govt to sit with parties tomorrow

Says Adviser Mahfuj Alam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government will sit with political parties and other stakeholders tomorrow to finalise the proclamation of July uprising.

"We hope that through Thursday's meeting, a consensus will be reached to finalise a document. On that day, it will also become clear when the proclamation can be announced and what role the government will play in facilitating its announcement," Mahfuj Alam, adviser to the interim government.

He came up with the announcement yesterday evening during a press conference held at the Foreign Service Academy.

In reaction to this statement, Samanta
SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Tulip resigns as UK minister

Starmer accepts, leaves door open for her return

AGENCIES

Tulip Siddiq, British treasury minister, resigned yesterday after repeated questions about her financial links to the ousted Bangladesh government run by her aunt Sheikh Hasina.



In a letter to UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Tulip, 42, repeated she had done nothing wrong but said continuing in office would likely "be a distraction from the work of the government".

Tulip, whose ministerial role included tackling corruption in UK financial markets, said she had fully declared all her financial interests and relationships.

Earlier this month, she had referred herself to Laurie Magnus, Starmer's adviser on ministerial standards, after it emerged she had lived in multiple properties associated with people with links to Sheikh Hasina.

Tulip was not found to have broken any rules by Magnus, reports The Guardian.

Labour MP Emma Reynolds has been appointed the new Economic Secretary to the Treasury.

Hasina fled after being deposed as Bangladeshi PM on August 5.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Muggings keep rising amid special measures

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Amid increased vigilance and special drives, muggers continue to terrorise city streets. Recent crime data shows a rise in mugging incidents.

According to police officials, they record cases of mugging incidents under the Speedy Trial Act when a person is caught red-handed or when there has been a snatching incident. When fewer than five people are alleged to have been involved in a mugging or robbery incident, the case is filed under the Penal Code. Police call these "robbery" (Dasyuta) cases.

The crime database of the Police Headquarters (PHQ) shows that a total of 159 "robbery" cases were filed across the country in December last year, up from 133 in November.

The number of these cases in 2024 increased to 1,412 from 1,227 the previous year.

Police officials believe the actual number of mugging incidents would likely be much higher since many people do not file cases, while many file general diaries citing lost items to avoid legal hassles.

Amid the rise in mugging incidents, Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam said at Dhaka

Metropolitan Police's (DMP) crime review meeting on Monday that the police must make every effort to stop crimes like extortion, mugging, and murder.

Speaking at the same meeting, DMP Commissioner SM Sazzat Ali

them are wanted in criminal cases filed with different police stations.

Besides making the report, the law enforcers conducted special drives in the capital in the last four months of 2024. A total of 864 people were arrested in connection



said that a zero-tolerance policy must be followed for snatchers and extortionists.

As top officials have been emphasising tough measures, an intelligence agency has recently made a report, identifying 432 mugging spots in the capital and on its outskirts.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the report, which also found that at least 979 muggers are active in these spots, and the majority of

with mugging incidents during the drives, according to sources in DMP.

Of them, 23 were arrested in September, 91 in October, 148 in November, and the number jumped to 564 in December, said the DMP sources.

SOMETIMES FATAL
Despite the arrests and special measures like the making of an

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Polls by August feasible: Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday demanded that the interim government arrange the next national election by August this year in the country's best interest.

"We think that the election is possible in the middle of this year, and that means between July and August," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir at a press conference at the party chairperson's Gulshan office to inform the outcome of the standing committee meeting on Monday night.

Fakhrul called upon the interim government, the Election Commission and the political parties to take steps to arrange the election by the middle of this year.

"We believe there is no reason to delay the election when the Election Commission has been formed and relative stability has been restored in governance."

The Election Reform Commission, formed by the interim government, will present its report today.

"So, we do not think there is any justification for further delaying the elections. The longer the delay, the deeper the political and economic crisis becomes."

Fakhrul said that they have long been saying there is no alternative to an elected government as it is the cornerstone of democracy.

On the issue of holding local government elections before the parliamentary elections, he said: "We demand the parliamentary election first. Our clear stance is that there is no question of holding local government elections before the parliamentary election. Right now, the focus of the entire nation is on the parliamentary election. That's where the crisis lies."

The last three parliamentary elections failed to take place properly.

"People now want democracy to be restored through an election. You must understand that local governments do not govern the country. It is the parliament that governs, enacts laws and upholds the core principles of democracy. If the parliament functions effectively, democracy becomes functional."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

No legal bar to Babar's release

Ex-minister gets bail in 10-truck arms haul case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday acquitted former BNP state minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar and five others, who were sentenced to life imprisonment by the trial court in the Arms Case filed after the recovery of 10 truck loads of arms in Chattogram in 2004.

The court commuted the jail sentences of five more convicts, including Paresch Barua, military commander of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), a separatist group fighting for an independent Assam.

The bench of Justice

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Fireworks and lasers light up the sky of Old Dhaka yesterday evening as the city celebrates Shakrain, a centuries-old festival also known as kite festival. On the last day of the Bangla month of Poush, colourful kites are flown from the rooftops during the day. The photo was taken in the Shankhari Bazar area.

PHOTO: STAR

40TH BATCH 480 SIs join service; dismissed cadets on hunger strike

SHARIFUL ISLAM

After over two months of uncertainty, a significant chapter unfolds for 480 cadet sub-inspectors of 40th batch as they are finally stepping into their roles as probationary SIs in the police service.

For them, this marks the beginning of a long-awaited journey in law enforcement as they received their rank badges yesterday.

Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam is scheduled to attend their passing-out parade at the Sardah Police Academy in Rajshahi today.

On the other hand, 321 others of the same batch, who were dismissed last year over allegations of misbehaviour, skipping meals and lacking focus during training, are fighting for a chance to reclaim their positions, clinging to hope amidst despair.

These dismissed cadets are holding a fast-unto-death demonstration in front of the Secretariat.

Their collective demand echoes a single plea: justice and reinstatement.

"Neither me nor any of my family members were ever involved in any politics. I studied at a private university. My father is a poor farmer and my uncles bear all the expenses for my education," said Prabir Roy, one of the dismissed cadet SI.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Yunus urges swift resolution of Korean EPZ land issue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday directed authorities to resolve the land rights issue of the Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) by early next month and consolidate all investment promotion agencies under one umbrella to enhance foreign investment in Bangladesh.

The instructions came during a meeting at the state guest house Jamuna in Dhaka, where Kihak Sung, chairman of Youngone Corporation, along with other prominent foreign investors, discussed investment challenges with the chief adviser.

Kihak Sung, whose South Korean company is the largest exporter from Bangladesh, highlighted several barriers to foreign direct investment (FDI), urging improvements in conditions for large-scale investments.



SEE PAGE 6 COL.5



Each winter, the fields of Lamakaji in Biswanath upazila, Sylhet, transform into a bustling hub for the dried fish trade. Hundreds of traders set up shop for four months, employing local workers to dry the abundant freshwater catch. By the season's end, an impressive Tk 50-60 crore worth of dried fish is produced, attracting buyers from all around the country.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Trump's Pentagon nominee comes under fire at Senate hearing

REUTERS, Washington

President-elect Donald Trump's pick to lead the Pentagon, Pete Hegseth, came under fire during his confirmation hearing yesterday as the top Democrat on the Senate committee accused him of lacking the "character and composure" to lead the US military.

Hegseth, a former Fox News host, is one of the most controversial figures ever nominated to be Secretary of Defense. The 44-year-old has railed against diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in the military, questioning whether the top US general has the job because he's Black. Prior to his nomination, Hegseth strongly opposed women in combat roles.

"Mr Hegseth, I do not believe that you are qualified to meet the overwhelming demands of this job," said Senator Jack Reed, the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

A number of episodes from Hegseth's past have sparked concern among lawmakers, including a 2017 sexual assault allegation that did not result in charges and which he strongly denies, and accusations of excessive drinking and financial mismanagement at veterans' organizations.

"The challenge of the Secretary of Defense is to remove partisan politics from the military. You propose to inject it. This would be an insult to the men and women who have sworn to uphold their own apolitical duty to the Constitution," Reed said.

Tk 15,000cr

FROM PAGE 1

tycoon Mohammed Saiful Alam, chairman of S Alam Group, and his family members; Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, former land minister, and his family members; Salman F Rahman, Hasina's former private industry and investment adviser and vice chairman of Beximco Group; his son Shayan Fazlur Rahman and his wife; Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, founder of Bashundhra Group, and his family members.

Bank accounts of the Awami League's research wing the Centre for Research and Information (CRI) and the CRI's "Young Bangla" project have also been frozen, data showed.

Besides, the owners and founders of Summit Group, Orion Group, Sikder Group, Nassa Group and Nabil Group saw their accounts get frozen.

Among others with their bank accounts frozen after Hasina's fall are SM Parvez Tamal, chairman of NRBC Bank; Mohammed Adnan Imam, former chairman of NRBC Bank's executive committee; ABM Mokammel Hoque Chowdhury, former managing director of Union Bank; Chowdhury Nafeez Sarafat, former chairman of Padma Bank; and Nazrul Islam Mazumder, former chairman of Exim Bank.

Among journalists, the bank accounts of Nayeemul Islam Khan, who served as Hasina's press secretary, and Mozammel Haque Babu, former chief executive officer and chief editor of Ekattor TV, were frozen.

"The accounts were frozen before I joined as the head of BFIU," said BFIU chief AFM Shahinul Islam, who was appointed last week. He had earlier worked as the deputy head of BFIU.

If no evidence of suspicious activity or money laundering is found in a frozen account, it will be unfrozen, according to BFIU officials.

The BFIU is investigating various irregularities, such as money laundering, loan fraud, and embezzlement of government and depositors' funds, by more than a dozen business groups.

It has already sent investigation reports on S Alam Group, Beximco Group and family members of former land minister Saifuzzaman to the CID and ACC for legal action.

The BFIU has also requested various countries, including Singapore, the US and the UK, to provide specific information on money laundering by half a dozen business groups.

Polls by August

FROM PAGE 1

Certain formalities are required for the election, such as updating the voter list. If anyone wishes to update it, it can be done within a month.

"Tasks like appointing presiding officers shouldn't take more than one or two months. Everything is already prepared."

The Election Commission has stated that they are ready to hold the elections and are prepared to conduct the polls, Fakhrul said.

They have also made it clear that conducting two elections simultaneously is not feasible.

"Therefore, in the interest of the nation, holding the parliamentary election is essential. If you want to put the country back on track, there is no alternative to an election."

Asked about the proclamation of the 'Uprising of 2024', Fakhrul said the party received a draft prepared by adviser Mahfuj Alam requesting feedback.

"The issue is so sensitive and significant that it cannot be addressed with a single day's notice. We have discussed it within the party and will discuss it further. It is also necessary to consult with other political parties on this matter. Moreover, discussions with constitutional experts are essential, as there are numerous constitutional aspects that we need to examine."

Muggings keep rising amid special measures

FROM PAGE 1

intelligence report to increase vigilance, people continued to lose valuables, money, and sometimes, their lives in mugging incidents.

On December 15, Mohammad Habibullah, 18, an employee of a clothing shop in Islampur, was fatally stabbed by muggers in Moghbazar.

The incident occurred around 5:45am when he was walking home upon his return from his ancestral home in Mymensingh.

Md Razu, officer-in-charge of Hatirheel Police Station, said they were conducting drives to arrest the culprit, but could not identify anyone yet.

Police sources identified Jatrabari, Sayedabad, and Mirhazirbagh as high-risk mugging spots, where drug addict muggers often target people for their mobile phones.

For instance, on December 18, around 8:30pm, cloth trader Kamrul Hasan, 23, was fatally stabbed by muggers in Sayedabad.

Faruk Ahammad, officer-in-charge of Jatrabari Police Station, said they arrested three suspects over the incident.

In confessional statements, the suspects admitted to stabbing Kamrul after he had refused to hand his mobile phone, Faruk said.

"We are conducting special drives in mugging hotspots. In December alone, we arrested 45 muggers. And in the first ten days of January, we have apprehended 25 more, including 10 top-listed muggers," he added.

Govt to sit with parties tomorrow

FROM PAGE 1

Shermeen, spokesperson of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, said, "The government has taken a long time to take any visible steps. We are not taking it cordially."

Since the government scheduled a meeting on Thursday and stated that a date will be announced there, she said, "We hope they will not break their promise this time."

Asked about their next step, Samanta said, "As our various leaders and activists are engaged in different areas to carry out programmes, we have not yet had the opportunity to hold discussions among ourselves. We will hold discussions tomorrow [Thursday] and announce our next course of action."

Meanwhile, at the Foreign Service Academy, Mahfuj said the Anti-Discrimination Students' Movement was supposed to announce the proclamation, but later the government said that it would take the initiative to prepare the proclamation after consulting with all relevant parties.

"Over the past two weeks or so, we, from the advisory council, have tried to prepare a draft of the proclamation based on the students' recommendations. We have also attempted to engage with various stakeholders, including political parties, to gather opinions. However, we have not been able to communicate with everyone."

Tulip resigns as UK minister

FROM PAGE 1

Tulip was under pressure over her occupancy of the properties, including a two-bedroom flat near King's Cross in central London and a separate home in Hampstead.

Besides, Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission has launched multiple probes into the alleged corruption of Hasina and her family members, including Tulip.

Tulip is one of those named in the commission's investigation into accusations of embezzlement of \$5 billion connected to a Russian-funded nuclear power plant in Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi money laundering investigators have since ordered the country's big banks to hand over details of transactions relating to Tulip as part of the probe.

In her letter of resignation, Tulip said

HUNDREDS OF MUGGERS

On January 2, at around 6:00am, private company employee Kajal Ahmed, 44, and three of his relatives were returning to their Khilgaon home in an auto-rickshaw from another relative's house in Ray Shaheb Bazar.

As they reached Adarsha Lane in Khilgaon, three individuals on a motorbike stopped the auto-rickshaw and asked them to hand their mobile phones and money. When Kajal delayed handing over the items, the muggers stabbed his left thigh and fled with two mobile phones and Tk 5,000 in cash.

"We filed a case with Khilgaon Police Station after the incident, but police have yet to recover the phones and the cash, or arrest anyone," said Nazmun Nahar Tonny, Kajal's niece.

Khilgaon is under DMP's Moitijheel Division, where, along with Wari Division, at least 212 muggers are active, according to the recent intelligence report on mugging.

Some 386 muggers are active in the Mirpur and Tejgaon divisions, 217 in Ramna and Lalbagh, and 154 in Uttara and Gulshan.

According to sources in the police, those actively involved in mugging in Uttara, Abdullahpur, and Airport areas include people from Tongi and Ashulia. Locals said mugging occurs every night on the busy road from Tongi Bridge to the airport. Sometimes in broad daylight, muggers swiftly take away valuables, including mobile phones or gold earrings, from passengers of

private cars and buses.

SN Md Nazrul Islam, additional commissioner (crime and operations) of DMP, confirmed that a list of mugging spots and muggers was prepared.

"We have deployed officers in uniforms and plain clothes at these spots to prevent mugging incidents. Along with this, we are conducting a drive to arrest the listed muggers," he added.

HOTSPOT MOHAMMADPUR

The list highlighted that the Mohammadpur area is the most affected by muggers.

In the areas under Mohammadpur Police Station, 205 people are actively involved in mugging, according to the list. There are multiple cases against each of them.

Mohammadpur also has the highest number of 108 mugging spots.

Mohammad Ibne Mizan, deputy commissioner of DMP's Tejgaon Division, told The Daily Star, "A huge number of homeless people live and work in Mohammadpur as the area is close to the river, and the Beribadh (dam).

"Besides, anyone can easily flee the area to Gabtoli, Old Dhaka, and Keraniganj by using the Beribadh after committing a crime.

"As a list has been prepared based on last year's crime data, police will now be able to increase vigilance and patrolling following the list, and also create awareness among people," he added.

and the Jatiya Nagorik Committee declared that they would announce the proclamation of the July uprising at the Central Shaheed Minar on December 31.

This move sparked various discussions in political circles, with many questioning the timing and potential impact of the declaration.

However, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing said on December 30 night that the interim government had taken the initiative to announce the proclamation based on national consensus.

Following this development, the two platforms said they would not announce the proclamation but hold a programme titled "March for Unity" at the Shaheed Minar on December 31.

From the rally, the student leaders gave the government a deadline of January 15 to announce the proclamation.

On January 4, the leaders of the students' and citizens' platforms announced that they would conduct mass contact campaign as part of observing their "Declaration Week," from January 6 to 11. Later, they extended their programme till January 14.

On January 9, during a press briefing, Mahfuj said the interim government will not formulate the July Proclamation but will facilitate the process for creating a consensus among political parties and stakeholders on the draft prepared by the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement.

businessmen.

The flat was eventually transferred as a gift to a Bangladeshi lawyer with links to Hasina, her family and her ousted government, according to the newspaper.

It also reported Tulip and her family were given or used several other London properties bought by members or associates of the Awami League party.

Hours after Tulip's resignation, a statement from Bangladesh interim government's Chief Adviser's Press Wing said Dhaka is committed to bringing back stolen money from around the world.

As Professor Yunus told The Sunday Times of London, Tulip may not have entirely understood the source of the money and property that she was enjoying in London, but she knows now and should seek forgiveness from the people of Bangladesh, it said.

No legal bar to Babar's release

FROM PAGE 1

Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Nasreen Akter also declared abetted (ended) the appeals of other three accused as they died.

There is no legal bar for Babar to get released from Keraniganj jail following the HC verdict, his lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir told The Daily Star immediately after receiving the judgement.

"The judges of the High Court bench said they will sign an advance order today [Tuesday]. I hope that this order will be delivered today and Lutfozzaman Babar will be freed from Keraniganj jail as soon as possible," the lawyer added.

A group of followers of Babar instantly brought out a brief procession on the Supreme Court premises and chanted slogans expressing satisfaction over his acquittal.

Two cases were lodged with Karnaphuli Police Station a day after the arms were seized at Chatogram Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL) jetty in the early hours of April 2, 2004, during the rule of BNP-Jamaat government.

The arms and ammunition included 4,930 sophisticated firearms, 840 rocket launchers, 300 rockets, 27,020 grenades, 2,000 grenade-launching tubes, 6,392 magazines, and 11.41 million bullets.

One case was filed under the Special Powers Act 1974 for smuggling of firearms and the other under the Arms Act for illegal possession of arms.

Yesterday, the HC bench led by Justice Mustafa delivered the verdict on the appeals in connection with the case filed under the Arms Act.

On December 18 last year, the same HC bench made a judgement on the appeals in connection with the case lodged under the Special Powers Act.

The court on that day acquitted Babar and five others, who were sentenced to death by the trial court, in the case.

The other five who were cleared from the arms case yesterday are

former industries minister and then Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami Matiur Rahman Nizami; former director of Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) Maj Gen (ret'd) Rezzakul Haider Chowdhury; ex-CUFL managing director Mohsin Talukder; former CUFL general manager (admin) KM Enamul Haque; and former additional secretary of industries ministry Nurul Amin.

The HC also declared the appeals of three accused abetted (ended) as they died. They are former NSI DG Brig Gen (ret'd) Md Abdur Rahim, labour supplier Deen Mohammad, and trawler owner Haji Sobhan.

In May 2016, Nizami was executed for crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War in 1971.

The jail sentences of five accused, including Paresch Barua, out of 14 who were given life sentences by the trial court, were commuted by the HC yesterday.

Paresch's imprisonment was commuted to 14 years.

The four others, whose jail sentences were commuted to 10 years, are former NSI director wing commander (ret'd) Shahab Uddin, former NSI deputy director Maj (ret'd) Liakat Hossain, ex-NSI field officer Akbar Hossain Khan, and Hafizur Rahman.

A section of lawyers, including SM Shahjahan, Mohammad Shishir Monir, Shadhan Kumar Banik and Mohammad Ahsan, appeared for the accused while Deputy Attorney General Sultana Akhter Rubi and Assistant Attorney General Md Asif Imran Zisan represented the state during yesterday's hearing.

HC OBSERVATIONS

Delivering the verdict, the HC bench observed that the prosecution could not prove the charges brought against all accused regarding actual control and possession of the firearms.

The conviction and sentence in criminal cases cannot be handed out without credible evidence, it said.

480 SIs join service

FROM PAGE 1

He said a four-member delegation of the dismissed SIs met the senior secretary of the home ministry's Public Security Division on Monday.

"Although he had previously assured us of verifying and considering our demands by January 12, we didn't receive a positive response from him during yesterday's [Monday's] meeting. As a result, we've begun a fast-unto-death programme," Prabir told The Daily Star.

They spent that entire night in front of the Secretariat and vowed to continue their protest until their jobs are reinstated.

Earlier, on January 5 and 6, the dismissed SIs held a sit-in at the same location. They temporarily called off their demonstrations on January 6 after being assured by the secretary that their demands would be considered.

On October 21 last year, 252 trainee sub-inspectors (SIs) were dismissed just a month before graduating from the police academy for "breach of discipline" during a break in a practice session for the closing parade of the 40th BCS (Police) Probationers Batch.

An additional 58 cadets from the same batch were dismissed on November 4, followed by 11 more later.

Sources said the Police Headquarters, in consultation with the home ministry, conducted a background check on the political affiliations of 811 trainees in the batch after the fall of the Awami League government on August 5.

A number of dismissed SIs claimed the allegations against them were baseless and their dismissal was an act of severe injustice. They expressed frustrations over the situation, saying that they and their families are struggling financially.

Meanwhile, no decision has yet been taken regarding the passing out of the 62 trainee ASPs of the 40th BCS and three of the 38th BCS (police) batches from the academy, halting the training of the officers of 41st and 43rd BCS (police) batch officers.

Police officials believe the long delay will create a vacuum of officers in the field level, with the law enforcement agency already in disarray since the fall of the AL government.

On October 20, 66 officers were scheduled to pass out from the academy. Twenty-five of them were accused of "walking in a disorderly manner" during their training session and served show-cause notices on December 15.

PUBALI SWAPNA PURAN

- ✓ Attractive Interest Rate / Profit [3 Months FDR rate plus 1% p.a.]
- ✓ Any amount can be deposited at any time as desired



পূবালী ব্যাংক পি.সি.সি.
PUBALI BANK PLC.

Best Financial Institution
DHL-The Daily Star Business Awards.

ISO/IEC
27001:2022

Open your
Account
from anywhere



PI Banking-
a Pubali Bank apps

Islamic Banking services are provided through online from all our branches and sub-branches (deposit & withdrawal only)

Star celebrates Staff Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star celebrated its Staff Day yesterday with a renewed pledge to uphold the highest standards of journalism.

The daylong programme was held on the rooftop of The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

The event began with a "Pitha Utsab" and cultural performances.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said the newspaper had previously faced pressure from the government; it now faces challenges from social media, often characterised by false and baseless claims.

He said the newspaper will continue to do bold, ethical, and responsible journalism, always holding the power accountable.

Simeen Rahman, a director of Mediaworld Limited, the owner company of The Daily Star, congratulated the newspaper's staff for their dedication and integrity.

"Throughout our

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, along with journalists and employees of the newspaper, celebrated Staff Day with much enthusiasm yesterday. On the occasion, many were recognised for their outstanding performance in 2024.

ZIA ORPHANAGE SC verdict on Khaleda's appeals today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court will deliver its verdict today on the appeals of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia challenging the High Court judgement that on October 30, 2018, enhanced the five years' imprisonment handed to her by the trial court to 10 years in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed yesterday fixed the date for the delivery of the judgement after conducting hearing on the appeals.

The apex court also will deliver its verdict today on the appeals filed by former BNP lawmaker Qazi Saleemul

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Election timelines a decision for govt, parties

Says UNRC Gwyn Lewis; UNDP delegation arrives in Dhaka



We're in the initial days and trying to understand what the needs of the Election Commission are and how the commission would like to run the elections. There are already works ongoing in terms of updating the electoral rolls.

GWYN LEWIS

UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh

STAR REPORT

A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) team from New York began assessing the Election Commission's (EC) requirements yesterday as part of preparations for the next parliamentary elections.

The UNDP delegation is visiting Bangladesh at the request of the EC.

The delegation, accompanied by a needs assessment team, first met Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin, four election commissioners, and EC

officials at the Nirbachan Bhaban in the capital.

Later, the team held a meeting with Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin at the foreign ministry.

Talking to journalists after the meetings, UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) in Bangladesh Gwyn Lewis said the EC requested technical support for different aspects of the works, reports UNB.

The works encompass IT capacity development, combating misinformation and disinformation, and addressing various issues related to transport,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

No more party symbols in local govt polls Says reform commission chief

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Local elections will no longer be held using party symbols, said Local Government Reform Commission Chief Professor Tofail Ahmed yesterday.

"Local government reforms will include proposals related to laws, structures, and service activities," he said during a meeting on the topic at the Singair Upazila Parishad conference room in Manikganj.

"We are engaging with stakeholders and gathering their suggestions. Based on these inputs, we will implement positive changes across all areas of the local government system," he added.

The meeting, chaired

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

It contradicts with July uprising's spirit Chhatra Maitri on removal of 'Adivasi' from textbooks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biplobi Chhatra Maitri yesterday condemned the removal of the graffiti containing the word "Adivasi" from a textbook for ninth and tenth grades.

The decision, which came following demands by ultra-nationalist groups, is contrary to the aspirations of the July uprising, it added.

The objections raised by Students for Sovereignty were not limited to the issue of indigenous people but also extended to religious content in the textbook, it said in a statement signed by the organisation's President Dilip Roy and General Secretary Jabir Ahmed Jubel.

"The decision is a grave insult to indigenous and religious minority communities. It also proves that the interim government's rhetoric about an 'inclusive Bangladesh' is as hollow as the claims of the fascist Awami government about building a so-called secular Bangladesh," it said.

"There have been similar instances of the interim government making undemocratic decisions under pressure from such groups, such as dissolving the Curriculum and Textbook Revision Coordination Committee following objections raised by some religion-based organisations last September," the statement read.

"Succumbing to pressure from certain groups reflects the government's submissive policies," it said, calling for a united resistance against extremist control over the education system.

No tension at border now Says home adviser

BSS, Dhaka

Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret) Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said yesterday that the situation at the border is almost normal as the construction of barbed wire fencing has already been stopped.

"There is no tension at the border now," he said while responding to a question after attending a views exchange meeting with divisional officers in Mymensingh.

He also mentioned that a director general-level meeting between the two frontier forces of Bangladesh and India will be held next month.

Jahangir added that some unbalanced agreements have been signed between the two neighbouring countries.

He said a letter has already been sent in this regard and that discussions will focus on how the problems arising from these unequal agreements can be resolved.

AL orchestrated BDR massacre Says Shahidul Alam

UNB, Dhaka

The ousted Awami League government orchestrated the BDR massacre to weaken Bangladesh's paramilitary force for political gain, said renowned photographer Shahidul Alam yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference at the National Press Club, he claimed the incident was staged to harm the country and benefit neighbouring interests.

"The government sacrificed innocent members of the BDR for its own political gain," he said.

The event, organised by families of imprisoned BDR personnel alongside the BDR Welfare Council, called for the cancellation of Section (e) of the Re-Investigation Commission's notification in the Palkhona Murder Case, a fair investigation, and the reinstatement of dismissed BDR members.

"These individuals have suffered years of wrongful imprisonment, with evidence suppressed and misinformation spread," Alam said, demanding a credible investigation. "We must ensure justice for those who have been unjustly punished."

Critics argue that Section (e), which allows new suspects to be added while retaining existing charges, enables further injustice. Families allege it has led to wrongful imprisonment and torture of innocent BDR members.

Shahidul accused former Dhaka South mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh and the then home minister of complicity in the killings.



John Biswas sets up his assortment of books around the trunk of a tree near Saint Joseph School in Mohammadpur recently. Unlike the average makeshift stall in Dhaka that occupies portions of a footpath, his pop-up store is pedestrian-friendly. Biswas has been selling books for over 35 years and originally sold them directly to schools. However, in his old age, he can no longer do so and now relies on pop-up stores like this for his survival.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

JU observes Selim Al Deen's death anniv

JU CORRESPONDENT

The drama and dramatics department at Jahangirnagar University yesterday organised a daylong programme at their campus, marking the 17th death anniversary of renowned thespian and former teacher Selim Al Deen.

Prominent theatre and cultural personalities attended the event, which began early in the morning with a procession from the department building to Deen's grave. The procession was inaugurated by JU Vice Chancellor Prof Mohammad Kamrul Ahsan.

The event, chaired by Prof Harun Rashid, featured a discussion on Deen.



Farmers use a paddy plant transfer machine to plant Boro seedlings at Batna village, Barishal. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: TITU DAS

SC verdict on Khaleda

FROM PAGE 3
Huq alias Kazi Kamal and businessman Sharfuiddin Ahmed challenging the HC judgement that upheld their 10 years' imprisonment handed down by the trial court in the same case.

The SC held hearings on

the two appeals of Khaleda Zia and on one appeal of Sharfuiddin for three days and on the appeal of Kazi Kamal yesterday.

During hearings, the lawyers for the convicted accused, Anti-Corruption Commission and even the state counsels told the SC

that there is specific charge in the case, no money of the Zia Orphanage Trust was misappropriated and no corruption was committed.

On November 11 last year, the Appellate Division stayed the HC judgement in the case and also allowed Khaleda to file two appeals

with it challenging the HC verdict.

The 79-year-old former prime minister then filed the appeals, praying to the apex court to scrap the HC judgment and to acquit her from the case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

PRAYER TIMING
JANUARY 15

Fajr	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

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)
PKSF Bhaban, E-4/B, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Dhaka-1207 Phone: 02-222218331-31, Website: www.pksf.org.bd

OPEN TENDER NOTICE (Goods)

Memo no: 53.23.0000.001.03.115.24.240 Date: 14 January 2025

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) was established by the Government of Bangladesh for poverty alleviation through employment generation. PKSF invites Tender in sealed envelopes from competitive tenderers for 'Procurement of Laptop (12 nos.), Printer (8 nos.), Camera (3 nos.), Photocopy Machine (3 nos.), Scanner (3 nos.) and Digital Display Board/4K Android TV (2 nos.) under GCF-RHL, GCF-ECCPC-Drought and giz-Haar Project of PKSF' under Package No: PKSF/GCF/RHL/2024-2025/GD-06 which includes 3 Lots.

The tender document including specification for the procurement should be submitted using prescribed 'Tender Document', which can be collected from PKSF during office hours from 15/01/2025 to 05/02/2025 upon payment of a non-refundable amount of BDT. 1000/- (Taka One Thousand) only in cash.

Tender documents should be submitted at the office of PKSF by 2:00 pm on or before 06/02/2025. Tender documents will be opened at 2:30 pm on 06/02/2025 in presence of the tenderers or their representatives.

Interested suppliers are requested to visit the link: <https://pksf.org.bd/tender/> for detail tender notice and instructions regarding the tender procedures.

PKSF reserves the rights to accept or reject any or all the bid documents without showing any reason whatsoever.

(Dr. Md. Jashim Uddin)
Additional Managing Director

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources
Power Division
Power Cell
Employment Opportunity (Revised)

Applications are invited from bona-fide Bangladeshi nationals for the following position in the project titled "TA for Strengthening and Development of Sustainable Power Sector in Bangladesh" under the Power Division, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources:

S/N	Name of the Post and Salary	Nos.	Requirements
1.	Director General (Project Director) (Monthly consolidated Salary Tk. 1,00,500.00)	01	(a) Must have Graduation in Electrical/Mechanical Engineering or Master Degree in Business Administration or Economics with at least 25 years working experience including 20 years professional experience in power sector. (b) He/She should have experience in administration and managerial profession. (c) Any Project experience in Power Cell will get preference. (d) Having Computer Skill will be highly appreciated. (e) Maximum age limit is 59 years but not less than 50 years.

Terms and Conditions:

- This appointment will be completely on contract basis. It may be extended on successful and satisfactory completion of the tenure as determined by the Power Division in the Contract, subject to the project duration.
- Applications should be addressed to the Secretary, Power Division, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka, along with 2 (two) copies of recent passport size photographs and copies of certificates of all educational qualifications and experiences.
- Application should be submitted to the Power Division (Rom No-208, Building No-6, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka) within 15 days from the date of the publication of this advertisement. Candidates already in service should apply through proper channel.
- Name of the position MUST be mentioned on the top of the envelope.
- Details job responsibilities and other information are available at www.powerdivision.gov.bd and www.powercell.gov.bd.
- Candidates who applied earlier according to the previous advertisement (dated: 10/09/2024) complying with the conditions of the current advertisement will be considered for this advertisement and need not to apply again.
- Power Division reserves the authority either to appoint or cancel the process at any stage, without showing any reason.

(MOHAMMAD SOLAIMAN)
Deputy Secretary
Power Division
Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 5
doing better than before. Routine tests are being conducted by the doctors. Treatment is being provided based on the test reports and some changes have been made to her treatment protocol," he said.

The 79-year-old former

prime minister has long been suffering from liver cirrhosis, kidney complications, heart issues, diabetes, arthritis, and other ailments.

Her health condition deteriorated after she was jailed in 2018 following her conviction in a corruption case.

Star celebrates

FROM PAGE 3
journey, we have remained resilient, strong, and committed to our ethics and values. I believe we will emerge even stronger in the face of adversities," said Simeen Rahman, also the chief executive officer of Transcom Group.

Romo Rouf Chowdhury, another director of Mediaworld Limited, said, "In terms of journalism and editorial policies, the newspaper is performing exceptionally well."

Prothom Alo and The Daily Star protested and exposed the rule of the fascist regime through their reportage, he said.

Thirty-three journalists and staff members of The Daily Star were honoured for outstanding performance.

Senior Staff Reporter Zyma Islam and Special Correspondent Partha Pratim Bhattacharjee won the Best Investigative Reporting-2024 award for their series on the NRBC Bank scam. Golam Mertoza received the "Editor's Performance Excellence Award", and Md Mohiuddin Alamgir was named Best Reporter.

Mohammad Suman Miah won the "Most Impactful Journalist" award, while Ashik Abdullah Apu, Md Sajjad Hossain, Md Arafat Rahaman, and Md Sirajul Islam received the "Year of the Youth" Award.

Feda Al Hossain was awarded Most Promising Sub-Editor 2024, and Mashfiq Mizan won the Best Sub-Editor award.

Dipankar Roy was named Best District Reporter, and Md Rajib Raihan earned the Best Photographer title.

Other winners included Md Mehedi Hasan (Best Business Reporter), Dowel Biswas (Best in Arts and Entertainment), SM Shafiqullah (Best in Star Bangla), Md Habibur Rahman (Most Talked About Photo), Abul Fatah Md Niaz Makhdum (Best in Graphics and Visualisation), Naimur Rahman (Best in Multimedia), Tamanna Khan (Best in Editorial & Op-Ed), and Khalid Hossain (Best in Star Sports).

Staff members from other departments were also recognised. They are: K Tanzeel Zaman (Feature Sub-Editor), Md Zahidur Rabbi (Feature Reporter), Ahsan Mahmud (Print Business), Walid Bin Alam (Digital Business), Sadman Muntasir (Marketing), Jubera Ibn Latif (Business Development Special Project), Saudia Afrin (Commercial Supplements), Imam Hossain Chowdhury (IT), Taufik Ahmed (Accounts), Md Toufiqul Islam (Digital Operations), Md Arifur Rahman (Production), and Md Niamote Ullah (HR & Admin).

The organising team of the exhibition "36 Days of July" received the "Team of the Year" award.

The programme was hosted by Senior Sub-Editor Naziba Basher.

Tender Notice

- Name of Institution:** School of Infantry and Tactics, Jalalabad Cantonment, Sylhet.
- Description of work:** Renovation of mechanized infantry maneuver ground and APC Track which are used for the Training of Personnel to be deployed under united nations.
- Start date of tender sale: 15 January 2025 at 0900 hrs.
- Last date of sale of tenders: 29 January 2025 at 1400 hrs.
- Tender opening date: 30 January 2025 at 1200 hrs.

আই.এস.পি.আর.সেনা-২১
১৪/০১/২৫

General Staff Officer-1 (Training)
School of Infantry and Tactics
Jalalabad Cantonment, Sylhet
Mobile No. 01769-183580

Scaling peaks and breaking

FROM PAGE 3
to dream, and now my dreams are unbounded."

Mazumder, the first Bangladeshi woman to summit Everest, highlighted the challenges at Baden Powell Peak. "We set up base camp at 4,600 metres and opened the route to 5,400 metres, but crevasses made it impossible to continue. Rather than give up, we adapted," she said.

The expedition was organised by Abhijatri, a Bangladeshi organisation

promoting adventure and gender equality, with support from the Liberation War Museum.

A press meet celebrating the achievement was held on Monday in Kathmandu, where Unesco Representative to Bangladesh Dr Susan Vize hailed the expedition as embodying the spirit of Sultana's Dream.

Debnath, a first-time trekker, said the experience was transformative. "It's not the mountain we

conquer, but ourselves," she said, quoting Sir Edmund Hillary.

The organisers announced plans to make the expedition an annual event and to release a Nepali version of Sultana's Dream. "This journey has taught us to not only dream but to conquer," Mousumi said.

For Rekha, the mountaineers are her calling despite societal doubts. "Mountains are my mother," she said. "I will always prioritise my dreams."

No more party symbols

FROM PAGE 3
the previous government Manowar Hossain Molla, also featured speeches by Additional Superintendent of Police Mohammad Wares, Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Kamrul Hasan Sohag, and members of the Election Commission.

The speakers criticised for politicising local elections, highlighting issues such as the allocation of party symbols and voter manipulation.

They emphasised the need to eliminate these issues and conduct fair elections.

A total of 103 representatives from various sectors, including former local public representatives and political party members, participated in the views exchange programme organised by the Local Government Reform Commission.

Election timelines a decision

FROM PAGE 3
software, and hardware, she said.

"The team will finish the assessment within 10 days and will come back here to present it before the EC," she added.

"We're in the initial days and trying to understand what the needs of the Election Commission are and how the commission would like to run the elections. There are already works ongoing in terms of updating the electoral rolls," said Lewis.

The UNDP will hold talks with the commission and other stakeholders, including civil society, academicians, and political

parties. Then, the delegation will put forward the recommendations and inform what support it can offer, she also said.

In response to a query, she said they are talking about parliamentary elections, not local government elections, as the EC made the request in that regard.

Asked about BNP's desire to hold elections by mid-2025, the UNRC said, "We are not touching on timelines... That's a decision for the government of Prof Yunus and political parties to make."

The needs assessment mission is looking into areas where the UN can support, she said.

"The team will visit Chatogram tomorrow [today] and will hold meetings with the stakeholders in the coming days," said Lewis.

Then, the delegation will meet civil society, academia, political parties, and every stakeholder involved in the election. Then, it will hold a feedback session with the Election Commission, the UNRC said.

Replying to a question about the timeframe of the next general election, EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed, the CEC, and other election commissioners said they are working in line with the window given by the chief adviser.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
বিভাগীয় পরিবহন কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, চট্টগ্রাম
ই-জিপি টেন্ডার নোটিশ

তারিখ: ১৩/০১/২০২৫ ইং

নং-৫৪.০১.১৫০০.২৫৩.০৫০.৬০.২৪

বিভাগীয় পরিবহন কর্মকর্তা বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে পাহাড়তলী চট্টগ্রাম কর্তৃক National Electronic Government procurement portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) ও নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা হইয়াছে।

ক্রম	টেন্ডার রেফারেন্স	কেন্দ্রের আইডি	কাজের ধরণ	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়
০১	৫৪.০১.১৫০০.২৫৩.০৫০.৬০.২৪	১০৩০০২৬	Purchase of IPS and maintenance for various stations under DTO/CTG Division.	EGP/OTM	30-Jan-2025 12.30pm

বিঃদ্রঃ ০১. শুধুমাত্র ই-জিপি সিস্টেমে নির্ধারিত Eligibility শর্তাবলি পূর্বকর্তার দরদাতাগণ সারসরি অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন।
০২. দরপত্র অংশগ্রহণের জন্য দরপত্র দলিল ও দরপত্র জামানত অর্থ নির্ধারিত বাক্যে জমা করতে হবে।

৫৪(২৫)(২৯০)

আনিসুর রহমান
বিভাগীয় পরিবহন কর্মকর্তা
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, পাহাড়তলী, চট্টগ্রাম

GD-149

Directorate General Defence Purchase
Ministry of Defence
New Airport Road, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215
Web: www.dgdp.gov.bd
E-mail: info@dgdp.gov.bd

TENDER NOTICE

- Sealed tender in Local currency is invited from bonafide Manufacturer/ Dealer/ Supplier/ Importer (enlisted with DGDP) for supply of the following item for Bangladesh Navy:

Ser	Name of Item	Date of Selling		Date of Opening	Cost of Tender Schedule	Tender No	Currency
		From	To				
1.	Spare Parts for Outboard Engine & Main Engine (Brand: Yamaha) (Qty: 72 Lt)	13-01-2025	09-02-2025	10-02-2025	BDT 5,000.00	254.07.206.2025	Local

2. Tender schedule with detailed specifications/conditions will be available in this Directorate General on payment as per invitation of tender selling rate (non-refundable) during office hours between 0900 hours to 1300 hours on the above mentioned date of selling. The tender can be dropped in the tender box latest by 1200 hours and the same will be opened at 1205 hours on the specified date of opening in the presence of the tenderers (if present).

LT Commander BN
For Director General
Directorate General Defence Purchase

আই এস পি আর/বিবিধ/২০
১৪/০১/২৫

GD-148

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Press Information Department (PID)
Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka

Memo No. 15.52.0000.012.07.007.18/1387 Date: 14.01.2025

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the national portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of goods as stated below:

S. No.	Tender ID, Reference No.	Procurement Nature, Title	Type, Method	Publishing Date, Closing Date
1	1058482, 15.52.0000.012.07.007.18-1516	Goods, Procurement of different Office Equipment and related service	NCT, OTM	15-Jan-2025 12:00:00, 30-Jan-2025 12:00:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no hard/ offline copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP portal is required

Md. Jubayer Hossain
Information Officer
255101065

GD-141

NIKO CASE
Six more testify at court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Six more prosecution witnesses testified before the court in connection with the Niko graft case filed against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and seven others.

They include Imran Hossain Chowdhury, Shahidul Islam, Jahirul Haque Talukder, Hamidur Rahman, Shafiqul Islam and Saidul Islam.

Judge Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun of the Special Judge's Court 5 of Dhaka set January 21 for next hearing after recording their statements, said a staffer of the court.

During yesterday's hearing, defence lawyer Mohammad Ziauddin represented the BNP chief in her absence as she is receiving treatment abroad now.

Till yesterday, the court recorded statements of 38 prosecution witnesses.

The seven others accused are BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman's close friend Ghausuddin Al Mamun, former acting secretary for energy ministry Khondaker Shahidul Islam, former Dhaka Club president Selim Bhuiyan, former senior assistant secretary CM Yusuf Hussain, former principal secretary Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, Mir Moynul Haque, and Kashem Sharif. Of them, Kamal, Moynul and Kashem are absconding now.

On March 19 last year, the court framed charges against the eight.

In December 2007, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case, accusing Khaleda and several others of abusing power to award a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko when she was prime minister between 2001 and 2006.

Tengragiri Ecopark lies in neglect

Dilapidated infrastructure endangers visitors, wildlife

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

The Tengragiri Ecopark, located in the reserve forest area of Barguna's Taltali upazila, is deteriorating due to a lack of maintenance and renovation.

The boundary wall of the wildlife sanctuary, along with roads and several small bridges over canals inside the forest, are either damaged or in a deplorable condition.

Although the Barguna Forest Department has assured that necessary measures will be taken soon, no visible steps have been implemented to address the situation.

The ecopark, built in the Tengragiri mangrove forest at a cost of Tk 2.64 crore, was developed between the 2010-11 and 2011-12 fiscal years under the "Increasing Ecotourism Opportunities" programme of the Ministry of Forests and Environment.

A 4.5 kilometre brick road was constructed within the park, along with 16 wooden and concrete bridges over small canals. Additionally, rest-houses, tube wells, and toilets were built for



visitors. During a recent visit, this correspondent observed that several bridges are on the verge of collapse, posing risks to visitors. The road has numerous potholes, and many bricks have been removed or stolen.

The rest houses were found in poor condition, with garbage piled up in various spots. The walls of the rest-houses, toilets, and other structures have peeling plaster, and fences meant to protect wildlife such as deer and crocodiles have broken in places.

"There are no bridges at several points over the canals, forcing us

to cross on foot. The benches are broken, and the rest-houses are unfit for accommodation," said Md Mahmudur Rahman Hasan, a visitor from Koraibaria, Taltali.

"The broken fences make the park insecure for visitors," added Md Mominul, a visitor from Kuakata.

Md Matiur Rahman, range officer of the Forest Department in Taltali, admitted the poor state of the ecopark. He said much of the damage, including 60 feet of the deer enclosure wall, occurred during Cyclone Remal.

"The authorities have been informed of the damages. If allocations are received, renovations will be carried out to improve facilities for visitors," he said.

Khaleda's condition much better
Says Fakhru

UNB, Dhaka

The health of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, currently undergoing treatment at a specialised hospital in London, is much better, party Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference at the party chairperson's office in Gulshan, he said, "We've received updates [about her condition]. She is now mentally and physically much better than before."

Khaleda Zia was admitted to the London Clinic on January 8 for advanced treatment under the supervision of liver specialist Prof John Patrick Kennedy.

A six-member medical team from Bangladesh, including BNP standing committee member Dr AZM Zahid Hossain, accompanied Khaleda during her journey to London.

Contacted, Dr Zahid said the doctors at the London Clinic have reviewed Khaleda's medical history, including conditions related to her liver, kidneys, and heart.

"Madam [Khaleda] is

Two killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Two people were killed in separate road accidents in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

A man died after a truck crashed into his motorcycle in Sreepur upazila of Gazipur.

Ekhlas Uddin, 30, was from Madhya Badda village of Katiadi upazila of Kishoreganj.

The truck from Barmi hit the motorcycle on the Maona-Barmi regional highway in Telihat union around 1:00pm, said Joynal Abedin, officer-in-charge of Sreepur Police Station.

Meanwhile, a cleaner of Brahmanbaria Municipality was killed after being run over by a garbage truck.

Al-Amin Mia, 35, was from Aairol village in Sarail upazila, said OC Md Mozzafar Hossain of Brahmanbaria Sadar Model Police Station.

Al-Amin was collecting garbage from different areas of the town with a municipality garbage truck in the morning. While unloading the waste at the Chhoybaria dumping station, the same truck suddenly ran Al-Amin over.

Indian arrested with 18 gold bars

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Border Guard Bangladesh arrested an Indian national along with 18 gold bars at the Mujibnagar border in Meherpur yesterday.

Nur Hossain, 48, from Hridoypur village in Nadia, India, was arrested near pillar-104 of the Mujibnagar border, said BGB sources.

Lt Col Syed Mohammad Zahidur Rahman, commander of BGB Chuadanga Battalion-6, said the arrest was made while Nur was attempting to flee to India from Bangladesh.

The gold bars, weighing 2.18kg, were found in three packets wrapped with scotch tape in his possession.

3 brick kilns demolished in Rangamati, Bandarban

STAR REPORT

Three brick kilns were demolished by separate mobile courts in Rangamati and Bandarban yesterday for operating illegally.

In Rangamati, a mobile court led by Kawkhali Upazila Nirbahi Officer Kazi Atiqur Rahman destroyed two brick kilns -- BRB Bricks and MBB Bricks -- located in Betbunga area under Kawkhali upazila.

In Bandarban, another mobile court demolished a brick kiln and fined it Tk 1 lakh in Thanchi upazila, said Thanchi UNO Rakib Hasan Chowdhury, who led the drive.

Earlier on January 5, the High Court directed the deputy commissioners of the three hill districts to shut all illegal brick kilns in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

[Our Bandarban and Rangamati correspondents contributed to the report]



Bangladesh Bank
Common Services Department-2
(Mechanical Engineering Wing)
Head Office, Dhaka-1000

Invitation for Re-Tender (Goods & Related Works) Through Web

01	Procuring entity	Common Services Department-2, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka-1000
02	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
03	Invitation Ref. No. & date	CSD-2(MES): 5/3/2025-87 Date: 12/01/2025
04	Source of funds	Bangladesh Bank's own fund.
05	Name of the work	Re-Tender for Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 554USGPM (or compatible to 150 TR Chiller) Capacity Cooling Tower & related works for central air conditioning system installed at Bangladesh Bank Training Academy, Mirpur-2, Dhaka
06	Address of the web for submission e-Tender	From web : www.bangladeshbank.org.bd www.bangladeshbank-bank.org (e-Tender)
07	Last date & time e-Tenders through web	26/01/2025 on or before 3:00pm.
08	Last date & time and name & address of the office for receiving original tender security and other documents	26/01/2025 on or before 3:15pm Director (Engineering-Electromechanical), Common Services Department-2 (7th Floor of 30-storied Building), Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka-1000.
09	Name & address of the office opening tender	Director (Engineering-Electromechanical), Common Services Department-2 (7th Floor of 30-storied Building), Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka-1000 on 26/01/2025 at 3.30pm (Intending tenderers or authorized representatives are allowed to attend the tender opening).
10	Qualification of the tenderer	a) Tenderer shall have at least 05 (five) years of overall business experience in the supply and installation of mechanical machineries. b) Tenderer shall have specific experience for supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of proposed brand Cooling Tower for central air conditioning system installed in any govt./semi-govt./autonomous/ recognized organization worth not less than Tk. 16.00 (sixteen) lac only in single contract in the last 03 (three) years. c) Tenderer shall have agent/distributorship of the proposed Brand Cooling Tower. d) The Tenderer shall have to furnish the certificate in this respect from an officer not below the rank of Executive Engineer or equivalent and shall meet all other criteria, terms & conditions as specified in the tender documents without which the tender will not be considered. e) The minimum amount of liquid asset i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the Tenderer shall be Tk. 18.00 (eighteen) lac. In case of credit facilities, Bank shall ensure that the abovementioned credit limits will be given if the said work is awarded to the contractor.
11	Tender security	Tender Security amounting BDT 50,000.00 (fifty thousand) only will be required in the form of Pay Order/Bank Draft/Bank Guarantee in favour of Director (Engineering-Electromechanical), Common Services Department-2, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka.
12	Work completion time	06 (six) months from the date of Award of Contract.
13	Address of official inviting tender	Sudhangshu Kumar Sarker, Director (Engineering-Electromechanical), Common Services Department-2 (7th Floor, 30-storied Building), Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka-1000.
14	Contact details of official inviting tender	Phone: 88-02-9530490, Fax: +88-029530321.
15	Special instructions	i. The Tenderer shall submit the tender through Bangladesh Bank Website (e-Tendering) & shall have a valid e-mail address for participating in e-Tendering. ii. Original PO/BD/BG as Tender Security has to be sent to Director (Engineering-Electromechanical), Common Services Department-2 within stipulated date and time of Tender Data Sheet (TDS). iii. Scanned copy of the tender security shall be submitted with the tender through web. iv. Tenderer shall submit the documentary evidence etc. (attested or original whichever necessary) at the time of Tender opening or when required, failing which the Tender may be considered as non-responsive. v. Tenderer shall duly fill in the Form PG3-1 (Tender Submission Letter) and Form PG3-2 (Tenderer Information sheet) as per format given in Tender Document. vi. PG3-1 form will be completed and signed by the Authorized Signatory on the Letter-Head Pad, attached by scanning during submitting tender and original will have to send to Director (Engineering-Electromechanical), CSD-2 at scheduled time as per TDS. vii. Furnishing of any false, misleading documents shall result in rejection of the tender and may lead to action under Rules 127 of PPR 2008. viii. All sorts of Security and Safety measures shall be carried out by the Contractor during execution of the work. ix. Bangladesh Bank reserves all right to accept or reject any or all the tender without assigning any reason whatsoever. No claim will be entertained in this regard.

স্বাক্ষর নং-ডিসিপিঃ ৪৮/২০২৫-১২১
তার ১৪/১/২৫

Sudhangshu Kumar Sarker
Director (Engineering-Electromechanical)
Phone: 88-02-9530490



প্রধান প্রকৌশলীর দপ্তর
ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
ঢাকা-১০০০

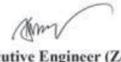
তারিখঃ ১৪/০১/২৫

e-GP Tender Notice

e-GP Tender is invited in the National e-GP System (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of works mentioned below under University of Dhaka.

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Package No.	Name of work	e-Tender last selling date & time	e-Tender closing date & time
1	1049058	SH-01	Construction of Bi-cycle stand at Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall, Dhaka University.	30-01-2025 13:30	30-01-2025 15:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online branches of any registered bank branches. Further information and guidance are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).



Executive Engineer (Zone-2)
University of Dhaka

GD-142



Dhaka South City Corporation
Office of the Executive Engineer
Waste Management Department
Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka.
www.dhakasouthcity.gov.bd

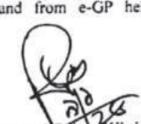
Memo No. 46.207.000.12.05.5167.2025 Date: 09.01.2025

e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of :

Sl. No.	Package No.	Identification of Lot	Tender ID No.	Last Selling Date & Time	Tender Closing Date & Time
1.	dsc/wmd/2024-25/2/P71	Cleaning Work of Pipe drain & Open drain at Ward-71 Under Zone-7. DSCC (Fiscal Year 2024-2025).	1043725	29.01.2025 up to 05:00 PM	30.01.2025 up to 2:00 PM
2.	dsc/wmd/2024-25/2/P72	Cleaning Work of Pipe drain & Open drain at Ward-72 Under Zone-7. DSCC (Fiscal Year 2024-2025).	1043726	29.01.2025 up to 05:00 PM	30.01.2025 up to 2:00 PM
3.	dsc/wmd/2024-25/2/P73	Cleaning Work of Pipe drain & Open drain at Ward-73 Under Zone-7. DSCC (Fiscal Year 2024-2025).	1043727	29.01.2025 up to 05:00 PM	30.01.2025 up to 2:00 PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's Branch. Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).



(Mohammad Golam Kibria)
Executive Engineer
Waste Management Department
Dhaka South City Corporation.
e-mail: xenwm@dsc.gov.bd

ডিএসসিসি/পিআরডি/২১৭/২০২৪-২০২৫

I am a director's artiste: Runa Khan

National Film Award-winning actress Runa Khan has garnered widespread praise for her acting prowess. Her latest film, 'Neel Poddo', will have its world premiere today (January 15) at the National Museum during the Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF). Directed by Elahi Towfique, the film features Runa Khan in the titular role.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

In an interview with The Daily Star, the actress shared her thoughts on her new film.

"Many international films from diverse countries are being showcased at the DIFF. Ten films from Bangladesh are also set to be screened, and I am glad that our film *Neel Poddo* is one of them. We will witness the first screening of this unreleased film today at the festival," shared Runa.

She further added, "On January 19, *Neel Poddo* will also be screened at the auditorium of North South University. Having the film premiere at an international festival, held in my own country, is a huge source of happiness for me."

The shooting for *Neel Poddo* took place in several locations, with a significant portion being filmed in the Daulatdia brothel.

"The term *Neel Poddo* refers to a flower that is rare and hard to find. I portray the role of a sex worker named

Neela, while the film's title has been used metaphorically. Through Neela, the film portrays the lives of sex workers, their socio-economic conditions, and the societal perceptions towards them," explained the actress. Elahi Towfique, the director of the film, is a university professor. Before making the film, he conducted extensive research and studied Daulatdia brothel and its history in depth. "As far as I know, it is one of the largest brothels in Asia. Capturing the lives of women in such a historic place and bringing them to the screen is a significant achievement in my career."

Runa Khan concluded by expressing her hopes for the film: "I wish *Neel Poddo* receives everyone's love and appreciation."



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Naquib Khan to celebrate 50-year milestone in music



Renowned musician Naquib Khan is marking his 50-year milestone in the music industry with a special evening of songs and stories, organised by Noor's Event.

The celebration will be held on January 17 at the Yamaha Flagship Center in the Tejgaon area. The singer will perform his popular hits and share memorable moments from his career, while poets Sumi Nur and Meghla will recite poetry.

Speaking about the event, Naquib Khan said, "I look forward to sharing the stories of my musical journey with the audience, along with performing their favourite songs."

Sumi Nur shared, "This is our sixth event, where we blend Bengali literature and music, with a strong focus on poetry. We are thrilled to celebrate Naquib Khan's 50-year legacy as a composer."

Oscar nominations announcement rescheduled again

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has delayed the Oscar 2025 nominations announcement for a second time due to the Los Angeles wildfires. Previously, the voting period was extended by two days to provide members with more time and moving the announcement to January 19.



The 97th Oscars nominations will now be announced virtually on January 23, as confirmed by the Academy's CEO Bill Kramer and President Janet Yang.

In a joint statement, Kramer and Yang expressed deep sorrow over the devastating impact of the fires and the losses experienced by the community.

Despite these changes, the Oscars ceremony is still planned for March 2 at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Magic and Laughs'

Dheo presents an evening of entertainment with *Magic and Laughs*, featuring a captivating blend of mind-bending magic and lighthearted comedy.

This unique event promises a delightful experience for audiences of all ages, offering an engaging combination of illusion and humor in a family-friendly setting.

DATE: FRIDAY, JANUARY 24
TIME: 5:30PM ONWARDS
VENUE: RIDDDHI BOOK CAFE

COUNTRYWIDE

ONGOING COLD WAVE

Sale of winter clothes peaks in Bagerhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Warm clothes buyers, especially people from low and middle-income groups, are thronging to different markets in Bagerhat as the prevailing cold wave continues sweeping over the region.

The arrival of winter has pushed up sale of warm clothes at different makeshift shops of the district as many low and middle-income people are thronging at those stalls to purchase winter clothes at a minimum price.

As the biting cold wave continues to sweep across the region, the district has been witnessing a surge in demand for winter clothing.

Makeshift warm clothes shops on footpaths and open spaces have become a haven for those seeking warm clothes within affordable prices.

Popular places like the Dargah Mazar field, Old Court premises and the Rail Station area are abuzz with activity, as shoppers thronging to those spots to find quality warm clothes at budget-friendly prices.

During a visit to different busy makeshift markets this correspondent found children's jumpers are being sold for Tk 150 to Tk 300, men's hoodies for Tk 250 to Tk 350, and women's sweaters for Tk 250 to Tk 550.

On the other hand, different kinds

of shawls range from Tk 250 to Tk 450, while woollen caps, gloves, and scarves are priced between Tk 60 to Tk 220.

The affordability of the winter clothes has drawn the low and middle-income people, who are eager to shield themselves from the chill but within their small budget.

Hanif Sheikh, a vendor at one of the footpath markets, described the season as a golden opportunity for their business.

"With the cold intensifying, sales have significantly increased. Sales worth Tk 6000 to Tk 8000 bring me a profit of Tk 2500 to Tk 3000 from each bundle."

Sales would rise further if the temperatures continue to drop, he said, adding that buyers are also pleased with their purchase.

A buyer Sharif Haldar said, "The quality of the clothes is surprisingly good for a footpath market. A sweater I bought for Tk 400 would easily cost me over Tk 1,000 in a regular shop."

Housewife Asiya Akter said she managed to buy warm clothes for all six members of her family from one of the makeshift shops in the town.

Harun Or Rashid, acting officer at Mongla Weather Office, said the minimum temperature in Bagerhat yesterday was recorded at 15 degrees Celsius and it may drop further in the next two to three days.



People from low and middle-income groups throng at makeshift shops to buy warm clothes at a cheaper price. The photo was taken from Badhal Bazar in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

ACC files case

FROM PAGE 12

5, 6, 9, and Rule 13A(1)(c).

The ACC alleges that during her tenure as PM, Hasina misused her authority to influence officials from the Ministry of Housing and Public Works and Rajuk. In collaboration with others, she facilitated plot allocations for herself, her children, her sister, and her sister's children.

These actions constitute criminal breaches of trust and abuse of power, punishable under Sections 161, 163, 164, 409, 420, and 109 of The Penal Code, 1860, as well as Section 5(2) of The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947. A total of eight individuals have been implicated in this case, the commission added.

In the case against Joy, the ACC alleges that he concealed the existence of properties or housing facilities under Rajuk's jurisdiction while

obtaining a 10-katha plot in the diplomatic zone of Purbachal New Town.

According to ACC, this action violates Rules 4, 5, 6, 9, and Rule 13A(1)(c) of The Dhaka Improvement Trust (Allotment of Lands) Rules, 1969. A total of 15 individuals have been listed as accused in this case.

The ACC filed four similar cases over illegal plot allocation in Purbachal in the last two days. While Hasina's niece British lawmaker Tulip Siddiq was mentioned in three of these cases, Joy was not named in any of those.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday asked the ACC to submit by April 10 the probe report against Hasina, her daughter Saima Wazed (Putul) and 14 others in one these cases.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court set the date after the ACC placed the case before it seeking the next course of action.

Jubo Dal leader

FROM PAGE 12

people, including Mohsin and Khokon, were involved in the gang rape.

"They first took us out on an autorickshaw. As we were wandering around, we suspected their ill intentions. When we tried to escape, they forcibly took us to a room at the sawmill and raped us. They beat us, recorded videos, and threatened to kill us if we screamed for help. We were confined from midnight till 4:00am."

She added that the accused later released them and threatened to kill them if they spoke to the police. They had an autorickshaw drop them off at Chaudagram Bazar.

Contacted, sawmill owner Khokon Mia said, "I was not involved in this matter. Mohsin and others brought

the girls."

Mohsin's father, Ranju Mia, claimed that his son was being framed. "A group is conspiring against my son. He is innocent."

Nangalkot upazila Jubo Dal convener Monirul Islam said, "I have not heard about this incident. If anyone is found guilty, they should face punishment."

OC Fazlul Haque said both victims are in police custody.

"We have completed their medical examinations and recorded their statements." No arrests have been made in connection with the case yet.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Al Amin Sarker said, "We have asked the police to take necessary action if the allegations are found to be true."

Yunus urges swift resolution

FROM PAGE 2

Yunus assured Sung that the KEPZ land issue, a major deterrent to FDI, would be resolved by February 6.

"We want the KEPZ to be a model for Bangladesh, attracting significant investments and creating numerous jobs," he said.

Sung welcomed the government's expedited efforts to address the longstanding issues with the KEPZ, stating that more Korean investors would now be interested in investing in Bangladesh.

"It will open doors for other investors, making

the KEPZ a model for investment," he added.

The Youngone Corporation chairman also called for faster shipment processing through Chittagong Port, pointing out that slow turnaround times hinder high-end fashion orders from global brands. He cited Vietnam as an example of how expedited exports can boost the fashion industry.

Yunus acknowledged the need for efficient port operations and stated that Special Envoy Lutley Siddiqi is working on plans to elevate Chattogram to a top regional port.

Both Kihak Sung and British investor Mohammed A Matin emphasised the need for a unified investment promotion body to provide efficient one-stop services for foreign investors.

In response, the chief adviser revealed that he had instructed the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) to consolidate all five investment agencies under a single office.

BIDA Chief Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun said that the fragmentation of investment agencies was a legacy of previous ineffective governments.

Will break the pen

FROM PAGE 12

Hasnat also said it is too early to consider rehabilitating the Awami League in politics.

"Whether the Awami League will be rehabilitated in politics is not a relevant question for now. First, every leader and worker must face justice."

"Those who speak of rehabilitation before the trial, those who say the elections will not be participatory without Awami League, we think, are also complicit in the oppressive politics that the Awami League had established," he said.

He also alleged that the state apparatus made various attempts to rehabilitate the AL.

However, it won't be tolerated, he added.

In a strong message to the interim government, Hasnat gave an ultimatum until January 15 to announce the declaration of the July revolution based on political consensus.

"We gave an ultimatum, and the interim government has committed to declaring it based on the consensus of all political parties. However,

it is unfortunate that we have not seen any visible action yet. We have made you our advisers, you represent us. ... If you fail, step down from your advisory role," he said.

Samanta Shermeen, spokesperson for the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, also addressed the event.

Later, as part of the event, leaders of Jatiya Nagorik Committee and the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement distributed leaflets in Chashara, Shimrail, and Kanchpur areas in Narayanganj.

Court orders

FROM PAGE 12

According to an ACC application submitted before the court, around 16 acres of land located in Gulshan, Dhanmondi, Badda, Mohammadpur, and Uttara were bought with Tk 200.23 crore in the names of Saiful Alam; his sons Ahsanul Alam, Ashrafal Alam and Asadul Alam Mahir; daughter Maimuna Khanam; son-in-law Belal Ahmed and nephew Jawadul Alam Chowdhury.

Five flats amounting to 30.34 decimals are among the properties in Gulshan, also read the application.

The 87 accounts were opened in the names of Saiful Alam, his mother

Chemon Ara Begum, wife Farzana Parveen, and 15 other family members, said another ACC application.

The anti-graft body reported that they deposited Tk 12.24 crore in 19 Union Bank PLC accounts and Tk 13.53 crore in 68 Global Islami Bank PLC accounts, raising concerns over potential fund transfers or laundering.

ACC Public Prosecutor Md Rezaul Karim Reza represented the commission in court.

On October 7, the same court issued a travel ban on S Alam, his wife, and 11 family members following the ACC's petition.

In the petition at that

time, ACC officials also cited a report published by The Daily Star from August 4, 2023, headlined "S Alam's Aladdin's lamp".

The newspapers investigation revealed that S Alam Group built a business empire in Singapore worth around \$1 billion without Bangladesh Bank's permission for foreign investments.

Despite the central bank authorising only 17 companies to make foreign investments, excluding S Alam Group, the investigation found that Saiful Alam acquired properties in Singapore over the past decade while attempting to conceal his involvement.

US 'stronger' on world stage

Says Biden in farewell foreign policy speech

AFP, Washington

Joe Biden said Monday that America was stronger on the global stage than it had been for decades, in a swansong foreign policy speech one week before Donald Trump's White House comeback.

The outgoing US president took aim at Russia, China and Iran, and urged the West to maintain support for Ukraine in an address at the State Department setting out his international legacy.

But Biden's unspoken target was Trump as he touted his rebuilding of international alliances over the last four years after his Republican rival's chaotic first term.

"The United States is winning the worldwide competition compared to four years ago," said Biden, after diplomats at the State Department gave him a standing ovation. "America is stronger. Our alliances are stronger, our adversaries and competitors are weaker."

The Democrat added that America's ties with its allies were the strongest "in decades".



A firefighter monitors the spread of the Auto Fire in Oxnard, northwest of Los Angeles, California, US on Monday night. Hot, powerful winds yesterday threatened to rekindle and whip up major fires that have devastated the hills and suburbs of Los Angeles, killing at least 24 people and changing the face of America's second biggest city forever.

PHOTO: AFP

POLLS INTERFERENCE

Trump would have been convicted: DoJ

AFP, Washington

US President-elect Donald Trump would have been convicted for his alleged effort to overturn the result of the 2020 election if he hadn't been elected four years later, said a report by then special counsel Jack Smith published by US media early yesterday.

The US Department of Justice's "view that the Constitution prohibits the continued indictment and prosecution of a President is categorical and does not turn on the gravity of the crimes charged, the strength of the Government's proof, or the merits of the prosecution, which the Office stands fully behind," the report said.

"Indeed, but for Mr Trump's election and imminent return to the Presidency, the (Special Counsel's) Office assessed that the admissible evidence was sufficient to obtain and sustain a conviction at trial."

Soon after the report's overnight release, Trump hit back on his Truth Social platform, calling Smith "deranged".

Ukraine launches big strikes on Russian cities

Factories in three cities damaged; airports closed

REUTERS, Moscow

Ukraine struck Russian regions with a major drone and missile attack overnight, damaging factories in at least three cities, officials and media said yesterday.

The Shot Telegram channel said that Russia had downed more than 200 Ukrainian drones and five US-made ATACMS ballistic missiles.

"The enemy has organised a massive combined strike on the territory of the Russian regions," the Two Majors war blogger said.

Moscow said Ukraine had fired six US-made ATACMS ballistic missiles, six UK-made Storm Shadow cruise missiles and at least 146 drones into Russia in an attack that it said would not go unanswered.

Roman Busargin, governor of the Saratov region about 720 km southeast of Moscow, said the cities of Saratov and Engels, on opposite banks of the Volga River, had been subjected to a mass drone attack and there was damage to two industrial sites. Schools

Ukraine fired US and British missiles, 146 drones at Russia: Moscow

had shifted to remote learning, he said.

Ukraine attacked the same region last week and claimed to have struck an oil depot serving an airbase for Russian nuclear bomber planes, causing a huge fire that took five days to put out.

Flight restrictions were imposed at airports in Kazan, Saratov, Penza, Ulyanovsk and Nizhnekamsk, Russia's aviation watchdog said.

The independent Astra news outlet reported a fire at an industrial site in the city of Kazan, east of Moscow, as a result of a drone attack.

Alexander Bogomaz, the governor of the Bryansk region in western Russia, said Ukraine had launched a major missile attack but did not say which missiles had been used.

CABLE SABOTAGE

Nato launches Baltic Sea patrols

AFP, Helsinki

The Nato military alliance said yesterday it was launching a Baltic Sea monitoring mission following the suspected sabotage of undersea cables in recent months.

Several undersea telecom and power cables have been severed in the region, with politicians accusing Russia of orchestrating a hybrid war against the West as the two sides square off over Ukraine.

At a meeting in Helsinki of Nato members, Nato chief Mark Rutte said that the "Baltic Sentry" mission would "involve a range of assets, including frigates and maritime patrol aircraft, among others, and will enhance our vigilance in the Baltic."

120 killed by shelling near Sudan capital

Say volunteer rescuers

AFP, Port Sudan

Sudanese volunteer rescuers said shelling in the greater Khartoum area has killed at least 120 people, as fighting between the army and paramilitaries has escalated nationwide.

The "random shelling" on Monday in western Omdurman, the capital's twin city just across the Nile River, resulted in the deaths of 120 civilians, said the Ombada Emergency Response Room, part of a network of volunteer rescuers across the war-torn country.

It said the figure was an "initial toll", and did not specify who was behind the attack.

The rescuers said medical supplies were in critically short supply as health workers struggled to treat "a large number of wounded people suffering from varying degrees of injuries" as a result of the shelling.

Since April 2023, Sudan has been at war between the forces of rival generals vying for control.

Most of Omdurman is under army control, while the rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) hold Khartoum North and some other areas of the capital.

LANDMINE EXPLOSION

Six Indian army personnel hurt in Jammu & Kashmir

TOI, New Delhi

Six India army personnel were injured in a landmine explosion in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district yesterday.

The officials said the mishap occurred when troops were on patrol duty. They said one of the soldiers accidentally stepped over the landmine near Khamba Fort in the Nowshera sector around 10:45 am, triggering the explosion.

The injured were immediately shifted to hospital and their condition was stated to be stable.

As part of an anti-infiltration obstacle system, the forward areas near the Line of Control are dotted with landmines which sometimes get washed away by rains resulting in such types of accidents, the officials told PTI.

This tragic incident follows another recent mishap in Jammu and Kashmir's Bandipore district. On January 4, four soldiers lost their lives, and three others were injured when an Army truck veered off the road and plunged down a hill near the Sadar Koot Payen area.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ministry of Commerce
Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection
Kushtia District Office
District Commissioner's Office (3rd Floor, Room No. 319), Kushtia.
www.dncrp.kushtia.gov.bd

Invitation for Tenders

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH			
1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Commerce	
2	Agency	Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection (DNCRP), Kushtia District Office	
3	Procuring Entity Name	Assistant Director office, DNCRP, Kushtia District Office	
4	Procuring Entity Code	Not used at present	
5	Procuring Entity District	Kushtia District Office	
6	Invitation for	Hiring of Vehicle (Microbus) for (DNCRP), Kushtia District Office, DNCRP	
7	Invitation Ref No.	26.04.5000.710.07.001.24.24	
8	Date	14 January 2025	
KEY INFORMATION			
9	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (National)	
FUNDING INFORMATION			
10	Budget and Source of Funds	Government of Bangladesh (GoB)	
11	Development Partners (if applicable)	Not Applicable	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION			
12	Tender Package No.	DNCRP, Kushtia District Office -Microbus/2024-2025	
13	Tender Package Name	Hiring of Vehicle (Microbus) for Kushtia District Office, DNCRP	
14	Tender Publication Date	15 January 2025	
15	Tender Last Selling Date	Date: 30 January 2025	Time: 12:00 Noon
16	Tender Closing Date and Time	30 January 2025	12:00 Noon
17	Tender Opening Date and Time	30 January 2025	12:30 PM
18	Name & Address of the office(s)	Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection, Kushtia District Office, District Commissioner's Office (3rd Floor, Room No. 319), Kushtia.	
	- Selling Tender Document	Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection, Kushtia District Office, District Commissioner's Office (3rd Floor, Room No. 319), Kushtia.	
	- Receiving Tender Document	Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection, Kushtia District Office, District Commissioner's Office (3rd Floor, Room No. 319), Kushtia.	
	- Opening Tender Document	Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection, Kushtia District Office, District Commissioner's Office (3rd Floor, Room No. 319), Kushtia.	
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER			
19	Eligibility of Tenderer	1. Valid Trade License, TIN Certificate and VAT Registration Certificate must be Submitted by Supplier 2. Detail informations are included in Tender schedule	
20	Brief Description of Services	Hiring of Vehicle (Microbus) for DNCRP Kushtia District Office	
21	Price of Tender Document (Tk)	BDT 1,000/- (One Thousand) Only	
	Package No.	Identification of Package	Location
	DNCRP, Kushtia District Office - Microbus/2024-2025	Hiring of Vehicle (Microbus) for Kushtia District Office, DNCRP	DNCRP, Kushtia District Office
			Tender Security Amount (Tk.) BDT 75,000/- (Seventy Five Thousand) Only
			Completion Time in Weeks / Months 24 Months
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS			
22	Name of Official Inviting Tender	MD. MASUM ALI	
23	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Assistant Director	
24	Address of Official Inviting Tender	DNCRP, Kushtia District Office District Commissioner's Office (3rd Floor, Room No. 319), Kushtia.	
25	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Telephone: 0247783089 Email: ad-kushtia@dncrp.gov.bd	
26	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings		

09/01/2025
Md. Masum Ali
Assistant Director
Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection
Kushtia District Office
District Commissioner's Office, Kushtia

GD-150

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
District: Dinajpur
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.2700.000.07.59.01.23-144

Date: 14/01/2025

e-Tender Notice No. 31/2024-2025

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (OTM) (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for 01 No. Package of CIBRR Project, FY 2024-2025 for this District.

SI No.	Name of package	Name of work	Tender ID
1	CIB-Din-W-19-b	Remaining work of 175m Long PSC Girder Bridge Over Atrai river on Kharkati Bazar to Vhail UP office road at Ch. 1950m under Chirirbandar Upazila Dist. Dinajpur, Road ID No. 127303011 [CHIRIRBANDAR]	1053885

Last selling date & time 12-02-2025, 15:00, closing & opening date & time 13-02-2025, 11:00.

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

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to 12 February 2025, 16:00.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Masudur Rahman
Executive Engineer
LGED, Dinajpur
Phone: 02589923381
xen.dinajpur@lged.gov.bd

GD-144

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Post-flood support quite inadequate

Affected people need comprehensive assistance to rebuild lives

We are disappointed by the news of the lack of adequate support for those affected in recent floods, particularly in Noakhali and Feni. Reportedly, many people in these districts continue to live in uncertainty, with most of those who lost their homes yet to receive government assistance for rebuilding. According to data from the DC offices, over 90 percent of the population in Feni and Noakhali was impacted by the August floods last year. A study by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) estimated the damage caused by the floods at approximately Tk 14,421.46 crore. Among the affected regions, Noakhali bore 29.07 percent of the total damage, followed by Cumilla at 23.51 percent, Feni at 18.61 percent, and Chattogram at 11.63 percent. Without a comprehensive post-flood rehabilitation plan and increased budget allocation for relief, the suffering of these communities will only deepen.

In Noakhali alone, some 128,300 houses were damaged, incurring losses of Tk 309.60 crore. In Feni, on the other hand, some 8,659 families lost their homes; among them, 1,798 houses were completely destroyed, while 6,941 were partially damaged. Despite these staggering figures, the government's rebuilding initiatives fall woefully short. Reports suggest that only 90 houses are being built in Noakhali and 110 in Feni under government programmes. While various national and international organisations have provided cash assistance, the scale of support is nowhere near sufficient to meet the overwhelming need.

As a result, many villagers are resorting to borrowing money from neighbours, NGOs, and banks to rebuild their homes. Many farmers, facing the dual loss of homes and crops, have been forced to abandon farming and take up day labour due to the lack of financial support for post-flood cultivation. Those attempting to re-cultivate their land are also struggling with the costs, with no government aid to ease their burden. Similarly, small business owners were also hit hard. Burdened by loans taken for rebuilding, farming or restarting businesses, flood victims are unsure how they will repay their debts.

We, therefore, urge the government to strengthen its post-flood assistance and rehabilitation efforts. It must provide financial aid to all who lost their homes, crops, and businesses due to the floods. Given their importance in ensuring the nation's food security, special attention should be given to farmers so that they can resume cultivation. The floods not only destroyed crops but also left farmlands covered in sand and saline water, rendering them infertile. Providing farmers with salinity-tolerant seeds suited to current conditions is thus imperative. The authorities must ensure that their support and intervention match the devastation wrought by the floods, and only then can all the affected communities rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

This cannot be the price of progress

Environmental damage from unplanned development, encroachment must stop

The filling of a large swathe of a wetland in Khulna city's Khalishpur area to make way for a housing project is totally unacceptable. Such actions not only harm biodiversity but also exacerbate the risk of flooding in the area. A photo published on the front page of this daily on January 14 clearly shows how the wetland has been overtaken by unauthorised construction projects that lack approval from the Khulna Development Authority (KDA). Unplanned development of this kind is a major driver of shrinking agricultural lands and wetlands in the country, with devastating long-term consequences.

But we cannot blame private developers alone. The KDA—responsible for overseeing development including by assessing environmental impacts of any housing project and enforcing legal measures against unauthorised construction—has also failed to act against their violations. The government must investigate why the KDA has not taken action against the developers flouting the law and harming the environment.

We have recently come across another case of environmental degradation that is also quite troubling. It involves the 11-kilometre-long Bhola canal, once a vital waterway for trade and irrigation, which is now in distress due to unchecked encroachment and pollution. The canal has lost its flow over the past six years, and as a result, local businesses are struggling. Traders are reportedly incurring additional costs in transportation due to the loss of its navigability, while the time required for transporting goods has also increased drastically. Furthermore, with the canal's water levels being reduced to just two feet, about 2,000 hectares of farmland in the Sadar upazila have been left without adequate irrigation, jeopardising livelihoods in the region.

Given the gravity of all such degradations, we cannot afford to ignore the environmental and social costs of unplanned development and waterbody encroachment. The interim government must launch a thorough investigation into why public agencies tasked with environmental and development oversight are failing in their responsibilities. It is also imperative to adopt a broader, more sustainable approach to development that accounts for the long-term consequences of neglecting environmental concerns. We urge the government to demonstrate greater commitment to preserving our natural resources.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Wikipedia launched



On this day in 2001, Wikipedia, a free internet-based encyclopaedia that operates under an open-source management style, was launched. It was founded by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger.

It's time our youth used their right to information

Dr Shamsul Bari and Ruhi Naz are chairman and assistant director (RTI), respectively, at Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB). They can be reached at rib@cittech.bd.com.

SHAMSUL BARI and RUHI NAZ

More than five months after the interim government took office in Bangladesh, our youth who spearheaded this change appear to have not yet discovered the country's Right to Information (RTI) Act, the only instrument available to citizens to probe the work of government offices. Yet, this is a readily available tool for them to create the changes in governance that they wish to see.

NGOs and activists still promoting the RTI law, however, tell us there have been recent indications of interest among youths in exercising the law. For this budding interest to turn into action, more of them must come forward, and the vacant information commissioner posts must be filled. Here are some examples to help our youth understand the importance of the RTI law.

The first example, dating back to 2010, relates to one of the earliest RTI requests in the country. It was submitted by the Bangladesh Environmental Law Association (BELA), of which Syeda Rizwana Hasan, an adviser to the interim

Despite its scant use, the RTI Act is indeed a formidable tool for citizens to monitor the work of our public officials and ensure their transparency and accountability to the people. Imagine the impact on the country if many more of us undertook the responsibility and utilised the opportunity provided through the RTI Act for similar purposes.

government, was the executive director. Information was sought from Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (RAJUK), the city development authority, on the construction of a high-rise building on Hatirjheel Lake in Dhaka, known as the BGMEA Tower. When RAJUK failed to respond to the original request and a subsequent appeal, a complaint was lodged with the Information Commission. The latter ordered the release of the information, which RAJUK refused to entertain. This led to the issuing of a legal notice to the authority's chairperson, who finally released the



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

requested information to BELA.

The information revealed that the BGMEA Tower was built on government land without respecting the conditions attached to the permission provided by RAJUK. A case was filed with the High Court, where the information was used as evidence of the tower's illegal construction. The court ordered its demolition for violating several laws. This building, a stark reminder of corruption at high levels and the need for public vigilance, was ultimately brought down.

Second, in 2011, an NGO worker named Asad was monitoring the implementation of minimum wage rules for workers in the shrimp processing industry. He asked the Department of Labour in Khulna for information on the number and names of shrimp processing plants in the region that had implemented the minimum wage. Following several hearings, he obtained an order from the Information Commission directing the labour department to provide complete and accurate information. This revealed that not all plants followed the rules, and many workers were denied the minimum wage. Since then, the situation has changed, and workers reportedly receive full entitlements.

The third case is related to the illegal occupation of public property. In 2014, Arup Roy asked the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) for

that the land belonged to the BWDB and was under illegal occupation. The commission ordered the BWDB to take necessary measures to evict unlawful occupants.

Another 2014 case, widely reported in the press, centred around the efforts of an NGO named Udayankur Seba Sangstha (USS) in Nilphamari district. The NGO enables communities to carry out collective self-help efforts. In a monthly group meeting, participants learnt that some members had received Tk 1,000 each from the local branch of Sonali Bank. These were apparently "beggar loans," approved under a bank scheme without requiring repayment. The recipients were, however, made to sign a form, one of whom discovered that the inscribed amount was Tk 27,000. Upon further enquiry, participants learnt that Sonali Bank had indeed launched a programme called "Swanirbhor (self-reliant) Bangladesh" to provide loans, between Tk 5,000 and Tk 30,000, to indigent people for income generation activities.

The group realised they were victims of a scam and would be required to repay the large loans they had inadvertently signed for. However, being aware of the RTI Act, each victim made an RTI application to the concerned branch of the bank. They soon received responses showing that each of them owed between Tk 10,000 and Tk 30,000 to the bank. The noise

In our last example, one Nowshad Hossain from the Boideshir Haat area in Chirirbandar upazila, Dinajpur, was unhappy about the continuous sand excavation in the Atrai River, on which Boideshir Haat is located. It damaged the beauty of the area and caused environmental hazards. As the excavation was conducted by a private enterprise, which took a lease for the purpose from the district administration, Nowshad sent an RTI request to the deputy commissioner's office in August 2022 asking for measures the authorities had considered to stop the damage being caused to the area and the surrounding riverbanks. Not receiving a response, he appealed to the divisional commissioner's office. The divisional commissioner promptly responded, saying that the excavator's permit was being cancelled.

Many such examples could be cited to demonstrate that, despite its scant use, the RTI Act is indeed a formidable tool for citizens to monitor the work of our public officials and ensure their transparency and accountability to the people. Imagine the impact on the country if many more of us undertook the responsibility and utilised the opportunity provided through the RTI Act for similar purposes. Such efforts alone may go a long way towards meeting many demands for reform aired in the country since the overthrow of the previous regime.

Jagannath University students' demands are reasonable



Rahat Minhaz is assistant professor of mass communication and journalism at Jagannath University in Dhaka. He can be reached at minhaz.uddin_du@yahoo.com.

RAHAT MINHAZ

Jagannath University (JnU) is the second largest public university in Dhaka in terms of student population. Over 17,000 students are currently enrolled across 38 departments and two institutions of JnU. Located in Old Dhaka, the university serves as a vibrant cultural and political hub. I joined this esteemed educational institution in 2016, and since then, I have witnessed the various challenges its students face.

At the beginning of this semester, I had a striking realisation during a class on business and economic reporting with fourth-year students. The class begins at 12:45pm. As part of my routine, I walk around the room to interact with students before starting the lecture. To my surprise, I noticed that most of them appeared tired, sleepy, overly exhausted, and some even looked hungry. They were clearly not in the right state of mind for learning. When I inquired about the reasons behind their condition, I uncovered some harsh realities.

To attend their classes, most JnU students begin their journey to campus as early as 6am, with some starting even earlier. Morning classes typically begin at 8:30am. After attending two or three classes, a fourth consecutive

The JnU campus in Old Dhaka is one of the most crowded academic spaces in the country. Female students have access to a single residential hall, but male students lack even that. The university has no playground, our century-old canteen is in disrepair, and there is no common room for male students. These are just a few of the many issues plaguing the institution.

session becomes an overwhelming challenge. Their day ends with a 3:30pm bus ride home, with some students travelling long distances, such as from Cumilla. This gruelling routine continues for at least four days a week, leaving students physically and mentally drained. It is no wonder they

are desperately demanding access to proper accommodation facilities.

On Sunday, I saw an ambulance carrying one of the students who had fallen ill during a hunger strike around 12:30pm on the JnU campus. As a teacher, I felt deeply ashamed that a student had to jeopardise their health and life simply to demand safe and accessible housing. Their demands include transferring the second campus project to the army, providing temporary accommodation, and offering housing allowances. Are these demands unreasonable? Not at all. In fact, these are fundamental rights, and it is disgraceful that students are forced to

trust the army because of its reputation for professionalism, discipline, and the ability to complete projects efficiently.

On Monday, my department held two important academic meetings. Students were also supposed to participate in an inter-department volleyball competition. However, instead of engaging in these academic and extracurricular activities, they continued their hunger strike. Suspending even one day of academic and co-curricular activities at a public university is a significant and irreparable loss. We need our students back in class as soon as possible, but this cannot happen until their demands are addressed with urgency.

If anyone doubts the struggles of JnU students, I invite them to visit the campus on any weekday. The JnU campus in Old Dhaka is one of the most crowded academic spaces in the country. Female students have access to a single residential hall, but male students lack even that. The university has no playground, our century-old canteen is in disrepair, and there is no common room for male students. These are just a few of the many issues plaguing the institution. A higher education institution cannot function effectively under these circumstances.

I humbly urge the authorities to take immediate action to complete the second campus. Our students are suffering, and their pleas for this essential facility cannot be ignored any longer.

risk their lives to secure them.

While entrusting the construction of the second campus to the Bangladesh Army is not an ideal solution, it appears to be the only viable option left. Corruption, mismanagement, and inefficiency have already derailed the dream of a second campus. Students

How Trump's resurgence could affect the global order



Dr Rakib Al Hasan is a physician, author, activist and international award-winning youth leader of Bangladesh. He is the founder and executive director of the Centre for Partnership Initiative. He can be reached at md.rakibalhasan.bd@gmail.com.

RAKIB AL HASAN

As Donald Trump prepares to assume office as the 47th president of the United States, the world braces for a seismic shift in global politics. His second term, bolstered by a stronger electoral mandate and full Republican control of both chambers of Congress and the Supreme Court, is poised to challenge the fragile framework of the so-called "rules-based international order." This order, long championed by Western democracies, particularly the US, may be heading toward an uncertain future under Trump's leadership. His unpredictable and transactional approach to both domestic and foreign policy suggests that the US' global role could be radically redefined, with profound consequences for geopolitics.

A mandate for disruption

First, Trump's return to power is unlike his first term. He steps into the Oval Office now with fewer constraints. Republican dominance in Congress and a conservative Supreme Court majority effectively give him an open field to enact his agenda. However, this concentration of power doesn't guarantee smooth sailing. Trump's presidency is likely to encounter internal divisions, public backlash, and global resistance.

On the other hand, Trump's hardline rhetoric and actions signal that he will govern with an iron fist. His renewed pledge to implement aggressive immigration policies foreshadows a crackdown on undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers. His appointed border chief has already hinted at mass deportations, even involving naturalised citizens. The suggested approaches will undoubtedly devastate countless families but may also backfire due to labour shortages in key industries like agriculture and construction, exacerbating inflationary pressures in an already

fragile economy.

The high-tech sector also stands at a crossroads. Trump's protectionist trade policies, including a proposed 25 percent levy on Canadian and Mexican imports and punitive measures against China, threaten to ignite trade wars. While such policies may appeal to nationalist sentiments, they risk crippling supply chains and driving up consumer prices. Even Trump's behind-the-scenes adviser, Elon Musk, has warned that the US' economic future depends on attracting skilled labour—a policy area seemingly at odds with Trump's restrictive immigration stance.

The UN and the decline of multilateralism

Perhaps the most telling indicator of Trump's global stance will be his treatment of international institutions. His disdain for multilateral organisations like the United Nations is well-documented. During his first term, Trump withdrew from the Paris Agreement and the World Health Organization, signalling his disregard for collective global action.

This time, Trump may go further. If the UN condemns US or Israeli actions, Trump could threaten to slash funding or even withdraw from the organisation altogether. His administration is likely to disregard international law when it clashes with US interests. Ironically, Trump's blatant dismissal of global norms might expose the hypocrisy of a system that enforces international law selectively—harshly penalising adversaries while excusing allies.

Foreign policy: Isolationism or neo-imperialism?

In foreign policy, Trump's intentions are murkier but no less concerning. His approach to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war will be a litmus test for his broader global strategy. During

his first term, Trump dismissed the conflict as irrelevant to US interests. Now, he may attempt to position himself as a peacemaker by engaging Russian President Vladimir Putin in back-channel diplomacy. However, such a move could fracture NATO and undermine the Atlantic alliance that has underpinned Western security since World War II.

His unwavering support for Israel is likely to deepen, potentially encouraging Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to pursue further annexation of the occupied West Bank and continue military aggression in Gaza. Trump's disregard for Palestinian rights, coupled with his administration's readiness to recognise illegal settlements, could

region and strain relationships with traditional allies like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Trump's relationship with Gulf monarchies, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, will likely be in the spotlight. His first foreign trip as President in his first term was to Riyadh, underscoring the strategic importance he places on

Israel and several Arab states, could also expand under Trump. Saudi Arabia remains hesitant to formally recognise Israel without progress on Palestinian statehood. Israel's intransigence makes such normalisation unlikely, potentially stalling Trump's ambitions for deeper Israeli-Arab integration.

Trump's second term could take the US down one of two distinct paths. A return to isolationism would accelerate the decline of US global dominance, creating space for a multipolar world led by rising powers like China. Alternatively, Trump might adopt a neo-imperialist model, blending nationalist rhetoric with aggressive military and economic strategies. This approach could drag the US into more direct confrontations, resembling the Cold War but with more fragmented battle lines.

Unlike the 20th century, today's geopolitical tensions are not centered in Europe. While Trump may focus on Russia-Ukraine and Middle Eastern conflicts, South Asia might remain relatively untouched—at least during the early years of his presidency. This selective engagement could leave critical regions vulnerable to Chinese and Russian influence.

On the other hand, Trump's authoritarian tendencies, evident during his first term, are likely to intensify. His admiration for strongmen like Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi, Xi Jinping and Kim Jong Un reveals his comfort with autocratic governance. Trump has openly mused about having dictatorial powers, raising concerns about democratic backsliding in the US.

Trump's second presidency is set to redefine global politics in unpredictable ways. His leadership could either bolster the US' waning dominance or accelerate its decline. Trump's actions could reshape alliances, provoke conflicts, and challenge the very foundations of the global system as we know it now. While a lot remains to be seen, one thing is for certain: the world is entering uncharted territory. And with Trump at the helm, the journey ahead will be anything but predictable.



US President Donald Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, DC, on March 14, 2017.

FILE PHOTO: AFP

Biden's strategy of militarily containing Russia has left Ukraine devastated and Europe on edge. Trump's potential pivot toward conciliation with Russia could force European allies to reconsider their security postures. Yet, this rapprochement might also embolden Moscow, accelerating the erosion of the post-Cold War order. The US could face a painful choice: accept strategic setbacks or escalate forcefully to reassert dominance.

In the Middle East, Trump's policies are expected to be even more aggressive than during his first

term. His unwavering support for Israel is likely to deepen, potentially encouraging Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to pursue further annexation of the occupied West Bank and continue military aggression in Gaza. Trump's disregard for Palestinian rights, coupled with his administration's readiness to recognise illegal settlements, could

permanently extinguish hopes for a two-state solution. The possibility of Trump launching strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities or pushing for regime change in Tehran raises the spectre of a wider regional conflict. His "maximum pressure" campaign, marked by the assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani during the first Trump administration, failed to curb Iran's influence. Still, Trump appears undeterred and may double down on the confrontational strategy. Such actions could inflame anti-American sentiment, destabilise the Gulf

these alliances. But Gulf nations have been diversifying their alliances, deepening ties with China and even engaging diplomatically with Iran. Saudi Arabia's growing relationship with Beijing—joining BRICS and partnering in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization—poses a potential conflict with Trump's "America First" agenda. Will Trump pressure Gulf states to sever ties with China, risking economic fallout? Or will he tolerate these relationships to maintain regional stability?

The Abraham Accords, which normalised relations between

Another year of devastation for the Palestinians



Sarzah Yeasmin is project manager at Harvard Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation.

SARZAH YEASMIN

Imagine waking up each morning to the sound of sirens echoing through your neighbourhood, the uncertainty of safety as you send your children to school, and the constant fear of losing everything you hold dear. This is the harsh reality many Palestinians face daily: a life filled with resilience and courage amid overwhelming challenges.

For many Palestinian children, growing up has meant playing in the shadows of conflict rather than playgrounds. Bombings have turned schools into ruins. The destruction of schools like the al-Fakhoura School in Gaza, and the attack on al-Awda School that killed several students, have left permanent scars on the community. Mental trauma often runs deeper than physical wounds, with many children showing signs of PTSD, recurring nightmares, and developmental delays. Some families have described the struggle of explaining war to their children while trying to shield them from its harsh realities.

Healthcare workers serve as silent heroes, tending to trauma patients in overwhelmed hospitals. Blockades choke the supply of critical medicines, while damaged facilities struggle to keep pace with rising public health crises. Clean water remains a luxury for many, with outbreaks of cholera and hepatitis A compounding the challenges in the already fragile healthcare system. Tragically, numerous doctors have been targeted and killed in the line of duty, including the deadly February 2024 strike on al-Quds Hospital, further weakening the healthcare



The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has only worsened.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

system and leaving communities with limited medical support. The death of Dr Ayman Abu al-Ouf during an earlier airstrike remains a painful reminder of the toll taken on the medical community.

Journalists brave these conditions daily, risking their lives to share untold stories with the world. The 2022 death of Shireen Abu Akleh, a veteran journalist shot while covering a raid, sparked international outrage and brought renewed focus to the dangers journalists face in conflict zones. In 2024, reports surfaced of media personnel being deliberately targeted during coverage of clashes,

further emphasising the dangers faced by journalists seeking to document human rights violations in Palestine.

Inside Israel, opinions on the conflict remain deeply divided. While some citizens support security measures in response to the ongoing violence, others have taken to the streets in opposition to the expansion

of F-35 jet parts to Israel, citing serious violations of international humanitarian law. Grassroots movements across Europe, such as massive protests in London, Paris and Madrid, have called for an end to the occupation and greater support for Palestinian self-determination, leading to unprecedented debates in the European Parliament about

Meanwhile, Syria's re-entry into regional diplomacy has introduced further complexities, with Israeli airstrikes targeting Iranian-linked militias in Damascus throughout 2024, escalating regional tensions.

Political shifts in Israel have also played a decisive role in shaping the conflict's trajectory. Benjamin Netanyahu's government has solidified hardline policies, emphasising security concerns while often ignoring humanitarian issues. The 2024 Knesset passed sweeping legislation that expanded settlement activities in the West Bank, leading to mass protests from both Israeli and Palestinian communities. These policies have exacerbated tensions, with military raids in refugee camps becoming increasingly frequent, including the devastating May 2024 raid in the Jenin camp, which resulted in multiple civilian casualties and drew sharp criticism from the United Nations.

Social media has become a battleground for debates over the Palestinian conflict. Throughout 2024, platforms like X and Instagram have been flooded with images of bombed-out homes and stories of loss, while misinformation campaigns and heated debates have further polarised public opinion. Hashtags such as #EndTheOccupation and #StopArmingIsrael have trended globally, amplifying the voices of activists demanding accountability. Viral videos capturing forced evictions and settler violence in East Jerusalem have heightened global awareness but also sparked ideological divides, with influencers and journalists playing a critical role in amplifying these narratives.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has only worsened. The blockade has strangled economic life, forcing over 80 percent of residents to depend on international aid for survival. The February 2024 Israeli airstrikes on Rafah displaced thousands and left entire neighbourhoods in ruins, prompting urgent calls

for humanitarian corridors to be opened. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has struggled to keep up with the rising demand for aid, while funding cuts have further strained its operations. Families often face impossible choices between securing food and medicine, with international relief organisations citing access restrictions as a significant barrier.

The West Bank has also experienced a surge in tensions, marked by increased military raids and settlement expansions. Violent clashes between settlers and Palestinians have resulted in multiple fatalities, such as the tragic March 2024 raid on the Jenin refugee camp where at least four Palestinians were killed. Entire communities have been uprooted, with limited accountability for settler violence. Palestinian men and children continue to face arbitrary detentions, with many held without formal charges under Israel's policy of administrative detention. Reports of abuse in Israeli prisons, including physical violence, psychological mistreatment, and denial of medical care, have drawn sharp criticism from international human rights organisations. The detention of children as young as 12, often without access to legal representation, remains a pressing concern for global human rights advocates.

Despite these challenges, the resilience of the Palestinian people has remained unwavering. Their steadfastness in the face of hardship continues to inspire global solidarity and demands for justice. The path to peace demands more than temporary ceasefires; it requires accountability, the lifting of blockades, and a global commitment to genuine dialogue rooted in human rights. The world cannot afford to look away. The voices of Palestine's children, healthcare workers, journalists, and families must echo loudly, for they embody the true narrative of resilience, resistance, and the unwavering hope for freedom.



GRAMEENPHONE ACADEMY Bridging education gaps in Bangladesh

Currently, GP Academy has 133,469 enrollments from students across 167 educational institutions and has issued 63,474 certificates. Notably, the academy has made significant strides towards gender inclusivity, with 47% of the certifications, amounting to 30,042, awarded to women.

MD. RIDWAN SAKIB ANJUM

According to the Population Census, in the past decade, Bangladesh's literacy rate has gone up from 51.77% in 2011 to 74.66% in 2022. However, this success in education has not directly translated into employment opportunities for graduates. According to reports from the World Bank, the unemployment rate among educated youth in Bangladesh has tripled during almost the same period.

This paradox highlights a critical gap: the disconnect between educational curricula and modern industry demands. Additionally, even those with skills often cannot effectively use these abilities in our competitive job market. That's where Grameenphone Academy comes in. This initiative, powered by Grameenphone, stands out as a unique platform offering free education focusing on practical skills tailored to bridge the existing skills gap in the local job market.

Grameenphone Academy was initially conceived to keep youth engaged and

it trained 345 students in essential skills such as communication, entrepreneurship, and digital marketing.

This phase was critical for refining the curriculum and honing the delivery methods to ensure the effectiveness and broad accessibility of the platform. By late 2021, Grameenphone Academy was ready to scale its impact and officially launched its platform. It was fully equipped to offer large-scale education that was free and accessible to anyone with internet access.

Moving into 2022 and beyond, the academy shifted its focus. Now, it's about creating measurable impacts by providing hands-on training to develop highly competent freelancers capable of competing in a global marketplace. The aim was to deepen the impact of the academy's programs by linking in-house training with real freelancing opportunities and expanding its reach through strategic partnerships with various edtech firms.

Currently, GP Academy has 133,469 enrollments from students across 167 educational institutions and has issued 63,474 certificates. Notably, the academy has made significant strides towards gender inclusivity, with 47% of the certifications, amounting to 30,042, awarded to women.

Farhana Hossain Shammu, Head of Grameenphone Academy, expressed her enthusiasm about gender inclusivity, stating, "Achieving 47% female certifications organically is a significant milestone for us. It's truly heartwarming to witness these women empower themselves and positively impact their lives."

Their engagement initiatives, including 30 campus town halls and masterclasses, further enhance this commitment to fostering an inclusive learning environment. These events provide real-time, interactive learning experiences, bolster direct engagement, and help GP better understand its users' needs.

Shammu explained, "We don't just focus on digital learning. Our mix of in-person events and online courses drives forward a comprehensive educational experience that prepares our learners for the real challenges and opportunities in the marketplace." She further stated, "The in-person events also help us understand our students on a much better level."

After the success of the digital courses and in-person events, GP Academy has taken on its latest challenge: the Freelancing Factory. This initiative is tailored to address the pressing challenges and opportunities within the

Bangladeshi job market.

With an annual challenge of integrating 1.9 million young individuals into the workforce, the need for practical and marketable skills is more crucial than ever. Through the Freelancing Factory, GP Academy aims to transform this demographic challenge into an opportunity by equipping youth with skills directly applicable to the global digital economy.

But what's the challenge here? Shammu highlighted the program's ambitious goals: "Out of 600 applicants, we carefully selected 100 students for the Freelancing Factory. We are training them to initially earn \$100 in three months and aim for \$1,000 in eight months through freelancing." She added, "The hardest phase is often the zero-to-one transition, and we want to help these students through that."

GP Academy is more than just an educational platform. Teresa summed up the academy's vision: "It's a movement to empower the youth of Bangladesh with the knowledge and skills they need. From the GP Startup Accelerator to the GP Academy, we are cultivating a culture of growth and opportunity that extends beyond our corporate boundaries and truly grows our future."

This vision is illustrated through the success stories of GP Academy. Success stories of individuals such as Khadiza, an economics student at Begum Badrunnessa Govt. Girl's College, who became an expert in Facebook marketing and MS Excel. Now, she earns BDT 10,000 - 15,000 per month from her small setup. Or take Muntasir, for example. He went from financial instability to becoming a mentor at the Freelancing Factory's web development course.

These are not just one-off stories. In a country of billions, there are millions of Khadiza and Muntasir waiting for the opportunity to learn and grow. That's what GP Academy offers.

Ankit Sureka, Head of External Communications at Grameenphone, reflects, "Where we live and work, it's easy to take education for granted. However, education is a privilege that should be available everywhere for everyone. At GP Academy, we operate on a non-profit basis to ensure that learning reaches every corner of society regardless of the obstacles."

In a country where practical and accessible education often does not go hand in hand, initiatives like Grameenphone Academy are vital in bridging the gap within our educational system. However, the biggest highlight of GP Academy is the people behind it. It is their collective enthusiasm towards their inclusive goal: education for all, at no cost at all.



productive during the Covid-19 pandemic. The journey began in late 2020 with a concept testing phase that involved just ten students from the Islamic University of Technology (IUT), focusing on online training in design thinking.

Regarding the initiative, Farhana Islam Teresa, Head of ESG at Grameenphone, said, "We initially started by training just ten students. Seeing that first group's remarkable success and transformation truly inspired us and lit a fire beneath us." As the year progressed, the academy expanded its reach in the beta testing phase. In partnership with top edtech providers,

AI startups to watch out for in 2025

As we navigate through 2025, the startup ecosystem is experiencing a transformative era, with emerging technologies reshaping industries and daily life.

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

This dynamic environment has led to a surge in venture capital investments, with a notable focus on AI-powered solutions. As such, here are some of the most promising AI startups, from around the world, to watch out for in 2025.

Worth AI
Founded by fintech veterans Suneera Madhani and Sal Rehmattullah in 2023, Worth AI is a SaaS platform that leverages artificial intelligence to provide inclusive financial underwriting solutions. Its flagship product, the Worth Score, offers a single, AI-driven credit score by analysing data from multiple sources, aiming to bring clarity and consistency to credit scoring. According to the company's LinkedIn page, it raised \$2.5 million in seed funding in August 2024.

Mirador Therapeutics
Founded by Mark C. McKenna, former CEO of Prometheus

Biosciences, in 2024 with \$400 million in funding, Mirador Therapeutics utilises advancements in human genetics and data science to develop precision medicines targeting inflammatory and fibrotic diseases. According to the company's official website, its proprietary platform harmonises millions of patient molecular profiles to discover and validate genetic associations with immunofibrotic diseases, thus identifying novel therapeutic targets and tailored treatments for patients.

Safe Superintelligence Inc. (SSI)
Established by Ilya Sutskever (OpenAI co-founder), Daniel Gross, and Daniel Levy in 2024, SSI aims to develop safe superintelligent AI systems. As per public statements by the company, it is focused on developing advanced AI systems that are both highly capable and safely aligned with human values. Operating from Palo Alto and Tel Aviv, the startup raised \$1 billion in cash in September 2024.

Gradient AI
Gradient AI, founded by AI veteran Stan Smith in 2018, is an enterprise software provider specialising in artificial intelligence solutions tailored for the insurance industry. The company offers AI-powered underwriting and claims management software designed to enhance risk assessment, improve pricing accuracy, and reduce claim costs and durations. In July 2024, Gradient AI raised \$56.1 million in Series C funding.

Figure AI
Founded in 2022 by tech entrepreneur Brett Adcock, Figure AI is a robotics startup with funding of \$675 million from the likes of Jeff Bezos, Nvidia, Microsoft, and OpenAI, with a total valuation of \$2.6 billion as of April 2024. Last year, it unveiled Figure 01, a general-purpose, autonomous, commercially viable humanoid robot that can help with a variety of tasks from daily chores to industrial labour, as per the company's official website.

Microsoft to invest \$3 bln to expand AI and cloud services in India



NEXT STEP DESK

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella has announced plans to invest \$3 billion in India to expand its capacity for artificial intelligence (AI) and Azure cloud-computing services. This investment marks Microsoft's largest single expansion in India, according to a report by Reuters.

In addition to the financial commitment, Nadella announced Microsoft's goal of training 10 million people in India in AI

technologies by 2030. This builds on the company's previous pledge to provide AI training to 2 million people in India by 2025.

Microsoft's investment in India is part of its larger effort to expand its global data-centre network and AI infrastructure. Previously, the company announced plans to allocate \$80 billion in fiscal 2025 for developing data centres and deploying AI and cloud-based applications, with over half of that investment directed to the United States.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

United International University (UIU)



Lecturer, CSE (CSE Background)

Deadline: February 3

Eligibility:

4-year Bachelor/ Master Degree in Computer Science and Engineering, with a CGPA no less than 3.5 on a scale of 4.0 or less than 1st Division/Class in any stage of education.

Minimum experience: N/A

Optimizely

Senior Software Engineer (.net)

Deadline: N/A

Eligibility:

Bachelor's degree in Computer Science or similar, or corresponding level of relevant education.

Minimum experience: 5-7 years



IDLC Finance PLC

Legal Officer

Deadline: January 20

Eligibility:

Graduation/Post Graduation degree in L.L.B or L.L.M from a reputed university.

Minimum experience: 1-2 years



Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC.

Business Expansion Officer, Walton/

Marcel Distribution Network

Deadline: January 22

Eligibility:

Bachelor's degree in any discipline with prior experience in these business areas: Manufacturing (FMCG), Electronic Equipment/Home Appliances, Group of Companies.

Minimum experience: 1-5 years

FOR MORE DETAILS AND THE APPLICATION LINKS, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW.



"I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it."

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Dhaka clubs' ultimatum to BCB over proposed constitution amendments

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka-based clubs have given Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) an ultimatum to revoke the proposed changes to the BCB constitution. The proposed changes being considered by a five-member committee, led by BCB director Najmul Abedeen Fahim, were leaked in the media recently.

When Dhaka-based clubs got wind of the changes, they came together in a meeting yesterday at a hotel in the capital to discuss the issue and formulate a stance on prospective changes. Under a forum of Dhaka Cricket Club Organisers' Association, the discussions were held with representatives from 67 clubs attending the meeting. The nine other clubs not present at the meeting have also voiced their support behind this movement.

There was a furor regarding the steps that the five-member constitution amendment committee is considering. Organisers spoke out against the nature in which Dhaka-based clubs and the organisers' contribution to Bangladesh cricket are being undermined.

The clubs altogether threatened to boycott cricket leagues if BCB approves of



the proposed amendments.

They agreed to an ultimatum till January 17 to revoke the amendments being considered and also announced that on January 18, they would go to the board and sit down with BCB president Faruque Ahmed to see where the BCB stands on this matter. They also demanded the resignation of Fahim from the board.

Furor ensued when it came to light that the five-member committee was set to propose the dissolution of Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM). The other areas of concern were the reduction of councilors from category 2 in BCB general council.

The number of directors representing Dhaka clubs in the board has been proposed to be reduced from 12 to four, according to the proposed changes. The organisers, instead, demanded that the number of directors representing Dhaka clubs be increased from 12 to 15.

"What has been done is an insult to all our clubs; that is number one. Another thing is, this is a settled issue. At times it may be that under a system of directorship, there will be a president, vice president, and secretary, and these things can be there. But the number of people, especially the contribution of our clubs in the Dhaka League, the clubs'

contribution to cricket development and player production, from the time of independence until now, has been insulted in this proposed constitution. The number of board directors has been reduced from 12 to four, and the number of councilors from 76 to 30. This is unacceptable. If they do not provide a valid answer to this, our clubs will refrain from playing until this is overturned," veteran cricket organiser Rafiqul Islam Babu, who arranged the movement under the banner of Dhaka Cricket Club Organisers Association, told reporters following the discussion.

The Dhaka Premier League, alongside the first division, the second and the third division leagues, have historically been the lifeblood of cricket in the country.

Lutfur Rahman, who runs a Dhaka Premier League club, reminded they were ready to boycott leagues if the BCB went with the proposed amendment.

"We gave them three days. The time hasn't passed yet. There's a process for amending the constitution. If this process stops, then our movement will be withdrawn. But as long as this is not done, we will continue our movement," said Badal.

KHO KHO WC Bangladesh off to winning start

SPORTS REPORTER

It was a winning start for Bangladesh in the inaugural edition of the Kho Kho World Cup as country's men's and the women's teams won their respective fixtures in New Delhi yesterday.

The men's team registered a comfortable 56-24 win over Sri Lanka at the Indira Gandhi Gymnasium. Sri Lanka's Idil Pramanik became the player of the match, while Rabiul Islam of Bangladesh was adjudged the best defender, the Bangladesh Kho Kho Federation confirmed. In their second match later in the day, the men's team handed a 83-26 thrashing to the USA to brighten their quarterfinal hopes.

The women's team followed suit by thumping Sri Lanka by a 79-24 margin. Ritu Rani Saha was the best player of the match, while Surovi Khatun was named the best attacker after securing 24 points in the one-sided contest. They will face off against Germany, while the men's team will play their third match against South Korea today.



BPL batting boom too good to be true?

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The just-concluded Sylhet phase of the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 has delivered some thrilling cricket, overshadowing the relatively subdued fixtures in Dhaka. Yet, questions linger over whether compromises were made to boost the tournament's appeal.

The tournament's 11th instalment, however, has witnessed high-scoring matches from the outset. During eight games in the Dhaka phase, the average score was 165.5, which rose to 173.09 in Sylhet. The Sylhet matches also offered nail-biting finishes, creating a lively atmosphere for fans who flocked in droves to the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium across six match days.

The tournament's only unbeaten team, Rangpur Riders, who won seven matches on the trot, must be given significant credit for providing some cliffhangers, especially in the Sylhet phase. Whenever they found their backs against the wall, they knew how to get out of those situations and finish on the winning side.

BPL 2025 TILL END OF SYLHET PHASE

MOST RUNS

PLAYER	MATCH	RUNS	HS	AVG	SR
Zakir Hasan (SYS)	6	251	75	50.2	149.4
Usman Khan (Kings)	4	249	123	62.25	171.72
Tanzid Hasan (DKA)	7	246	108	35.14	138.2
Liton Das (DKA)	6	240	125*	48	164.38
Saif Hassan (RAR)	7	228	80	38	126.66

MOST WICKETS

PLAYER	MATCH	WKTS	BBi	ECON
Taskin Ahmed (RAJ)	6	14	7/19	6.72
Abu Hider (KT)	5	11	4/44	9.87
Tanzim Sakib (SYS)	6	11	2/23	9.1
Khushdil Shah (RAR)	7	9	3/18	6
Mahedi Hasan (RAR)	7	9	4/27	8

should they take all the credit for that, or are there other factors -- apart from good wickets, which also had an outside impact on their sudden rise -- given that they have hardly showcased similar performances in both international and domestic matches?

One such factor is the dimension of the playing field. The boundary lengths in the ongoing BPL have been under scrutiny since the beginning of the tournament. As in Dhaka, Sylhet also featured smaller boundaries, making it easier for batters to clear them, even when some shots were mistimed.

Moreover, the quality of bowlers -- both local and foreign -- in many franchises is so below par that even in the recently concluded National Cricket League T20 or the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League -- a 50-over domestic club-based tournament -- the batters came across superior bowling attacks.

For instance, in a high-scoring game featuring swashbuckling centuries from Liton and Tanzid, Durbar Rajshahi's bowling attack included Shafiqul Islam and Sohag Gazi, neither of whom had featured in the BPL since 2021-22. Apart from Taskin Ahmed, there have been few standout bowlers to truly challenge the batters.

With the BPL heading to the Chattogram phase from tomorrow, there is every possibility of a similar trend continuing in the port city. But concerns remain: are batters gaining a misleading sense of confidence that could prove detrimental in the long run?



In one of those contests, Rangpur skipper Nurul Hasan Sohan smashed 30 runs in the last two overs when his side required 26 against defending champions Fortune Barishal to clinch a highly unlikely victory. Meanwhile, in the last Sylhet phase game, Rangpur went on to win against Khulna Tigers by eight runs despite the opposition needing only 22 runs in three overs with seven wickets in hand.

Apart from Rangpur, Dhaka Capitals, Chittagong Kings, and Sylhet Strikers also provided some closely fought contests. Meanwhile, compared to the

Dhaka phase -- where Chittagong's Usman Khan and Dhaka's Thisara Perera scored hundreds -- the centurion tally increased to three in Sylhet, with Rangpur's Alex Hales and Dhaka's Liton Das and Tanzid Hasan Tamim registering three digits.

Both Liton and Tamim scored tons in the same innings, forming a record-breaking 241-run opening stand, helping Dhaka become the first BPL franchise to post a 250-run total.

However, as the batters made merry on the field, the question automatically arose:



Aged 38, Monfils 'crazy happy' after epic win

AFP, Melbourne

A "crazy happy" Gael Monfils said age was just a number Tuesday after the 38-year-old Frenchman toppled young countryman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard in a five-set thriller at the Australian Open.

The flamboyant Monfils became the oldest singles champion in ATP Tour history when he swept to victory at the Auckland Classic on Saturday.

He kept the momentum going against Mpetshi Perricard, raising his arms in celebration after a 7-6 (9/7), 6-3, 6-7 (6/8), 6-7 (5/7), 6-4 victory over three hours and 46 minutes in the first round.

"Honestly, I never really think about it," he said of his age. "I know I'm aged a little bit, but I try my best."

"I know this week I can sometimes have double the age of the guy (he's playing). I have, I think, 21 years of career, and he's 21 years old, Giovanni."



"Of course numbers are there, but I'm fighting, so I try not to put any number in my head."

Monfils won the first two sets and should have wrapped it up in the third, when he had two match points against a player with one of the game's most lethal serves.

But Mpetshi Perricard, who has risen from 205 in the world at the start of 2024 to his current 30, fought back.

Ultimately, Monfils' experience paid off, keeping his cool to reach the second round in Melbourne for a 17th time where he will meet Germany's Daniel Altmaier.

"I have a lot of experience in those matches, also my condition, I feel I was good physically," said the veteran.

"I won this match. I'm crazy happy. I have another chance to come out and play in a packed stadium."

"Everything is a win now, so, you know, no pressure on me."



Captains of the sixteen participating teams, including Bangladesh Under-19 skipper Sumaiya Akter, took part in the Captains' Day photoshoot at the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur yesterday ahead of the U19 Women's T20 World Cup, starting from January 18.

PLOT ALLOCATION ACC files case against Hasina, Joy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed separate cases against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her son, Sajeeb Wazed Joy.

Hasina has been accused of abusing her position as the head of government and securing a plot under the Purbachal New Town Project despite owning properties under the jurisdiction of the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), which she failed to disclose in her electoral affidavit.



The case details, confirmed by ACC Director General Akhtar Hossain, reveal that Hasina obtained a 10-katha plot in the prime diplomatic zone of Purbachal New Town by violating several provisions of The Dhaka Improvement Trust (Allotment of Lands) Rules, 1969, including Rules 4,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3



In blatant disregard for a "no stopping" sign just a few feet away, a bus makes a stop to let off passengers, creating a hazardous situation for other vehicles. The photo was taken on the Mayor Hanif Flyover in the capital recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'Will break the pen that writes for fallen fascists' Says Hasnat Abdullah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Media and intellectuals who speak in favour of the fallen fascists will face the same fate as them, said Hasnat Abdullah, the convener of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, today.

"Those talk show hosts and intellectuals, who are now vocal about human rights of Awami League men, supported fascism before," he said yesterday at the Shaheed Minar in Chashara of Narayanganj city before distributing leaflets supporting the "Proclamation of the July Uprising".

"We will break the pens that write in favour of fascism," said Hasnat, vowing a strong stand against any media, teacher or intellectual who speaks in favour of fascism.

"If you fail to understand the young generation's spirit, then your fate will be like that of the fallen Awami League," he warned.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

S ALAM, FAMILY Court orders freezing of 87 bank accounts 16 acres of land in Dhaka to be confiscated

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the confiscation of around 16 acres of land in Dhaka city and the freezing of 87 bank accounts owned by S Alam Group owner Mohammed Saiful Alam and his family members in connection with corruption allegations.

The order came after Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) launched an inquiry into allegations of laundering \$1 billion to Singapore and other countries.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka issued the orders following two separate applications by ACC Deputy Director Md Abu Sayeed, head of the inquiry team, said an ACC official working in the court.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Gaza ceasefire deal 'very close'

Says Qatar; 27 more Palestinians killed in
Israeli strikes across the enclave

REUTERS, Doha

Negotiators were meeting in Qatar yesterday hoping to finalise details of a plan to end the offensive in Gaza, after US President Joe Biden indicated a ceasefire and hostage release deal was imminent.

Qatar's foreign ministry spokesperson Majed Al-Ansari told a news conference that talks on the final details were underway and this was the closest point to a deal reached over the past months. "We do believe that we are at the final stages... certainly we are hopeful that this would lead very soon to an agreement," Ansari said.

Hasnat said the talks had reached the final steps and that it hoped this round of negotiations would lead to a deal. A Palestinian source close to the talks told Reuters he expected the deal to be finalised by yesterday if "all goes well".

An Israeli official said talks had reached a critical phase although some details needed to

be hammered out: "We are close, we are not there yet".

The official also said the deal's first stage would include the release of 33 hostages, including children, women, female soldiers, men above 50, and the wounded

and sick and a gradual, partial withdrawal of Israeli forces. Meanwhile, on the ground, violence continued yesterday, with Palestinian medics reporting at least 27 people were killed in Israeli strikes across the enclave. Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed 46,645 people, a majority of them civilians, according to the health ministry in

the Hamas-run territory.

Qatari mediators had given Israel and Hamas a final draft of a text for a ceasefire and release of hostages agreement on Monday, an official briefed on the negotiations said, after what he described as a midnight breakthrough in talks in Doha.

US President-elect Donald Trump's incoming Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and Biden's envoy Brett McGurk have both attended the talks hosted by Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. Israel is represented by David Barnea, director of spy service Mossad, and Ronen Bar, director of the Shin Bet internal security agency.

"The deal ... would free the hostages, halt the fighting, provide security to Israel and allow us to significantly surge humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians who suffered terribly in this war that Hamas started," Biden said on Monday.

» Talks reached a critical phase: Israeli official

» Hamas hopes this round of talks will lead to a deal

Jubo Dal leader, 6 others sued for rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Cumilla

Seven people, including a local Jubo Dal leader, were sued yesterday for raping two women in Nangalkot upazila of Cumilla.

Nangalkot Police Station registered the case after initial investigations, said Officer-in-Charge (OC) AK Fazlul Haque.

According to police and local sources, the incident occurred on January 9 at a sawmill in the Sebakhola area of Nurpur village under Nangalkot upazila.

The two victims filed a complaint at the police station on January 12.

The two main accused are local Jubo Dal leader Md Mohsin, son of Ranju Mia of Bangadda union, and Khokon Mia, owner of the sawmill. A total of seven individuals have been named in the case.

One of the victims alleged that around 10 to 12

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

Northern Aral Sea now has nearly 50pc more water

AFP, Almaty

Kazakhstan said on Monday the northern part of the Aral Sea now contains nearly 50 percent more water than in 2008, a rare environmental success story in a region plagued by pollution.

The Aral Sea between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was once the fourth largest lake in the world, before Soviet irrigation projects caused most of it to dry up.

The transformation of the freshwater sea -- once 40 metres deep and spanning 68,000 square kilometres -- has been dubbed one of the world's worst environmental catastrophes.

Since 2008, the volume of water in the northern, smaller part of the sea has "increased by 42 percent and reached 27 billion cubic metres", the Central Asian republic's water resources ministry said.

This was "thanks to the implementation of Phase One of the (Northern) Aral Sea conservation project", the ministry told AFP.

The scheme, funded jointly by the Kazakh government and the World Bank, has involved constructing new infrastructure to prevent water flowing out of the sea.



US to ban smart cars with Chinese tech

AFP, Washington

The United States yesterday finalised a rule effectively barring Chinese technology from cars in the American market, taking aim at software and hardware from the world's second-biggest economy over national security risks.

The announcement, which also pertains to Russian technology, comes as outgoing President Joe Biden wraps up efforts to step up curbs on China, and after a months-long regulatory process.

The rule follows an announcement this month that Washington is mulling new restrictions to address risks posed by drones with tech from adversaries like China and Russia.

"Cars today aren't just steel on wheels -- they're computers," said Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo.

She noted that modern vehicles contain cameras, microphones, GPS tracking and other technologies connected to the internet.



A woman and a child sit with salvaged footwear amidst debris and rubble at the site of Israeli bombardment on a residential block in Jalaa Street in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Fire-hit LA faces new peril as winds ramp up

AFP, Los Angeles

Hot, powerful winds yesterday threatened to rekindle and whip up major fires that have devastated the hills and suburbs of Los Angeles, killing at least 24 people and changing the face of America's second biggest city forever.

A week after blazes erupted and spread uncontained, forecasters predicted "particularly dangerous" dry Santa Ana winds would spike the wildfire threat for already exhausted firefighters.

"Stay aware of your surroundings. Be ready to evacuate. Avoid anything

that can spark a fire," the National Weather Service warned.

A large part of Southern California was under a Red Flag warning, indicating that intense dryness and furious winds would make conditions ripe for wildfire.

Part of Los Angeles County and much of neighboring Ventura County were in a "Particularly Dangerous Situation," according to the NWS, a designation that was also declared before last week's deadly blazes erupted.

Officials insisted they were poised, with Los Angeles city fire chief Kristin

Crowley telling reporters a huge firefighting operation was well placed.

"I have strategically pre-positioned engine strike teams and task forces which are dedicated to rapid response for any new fire that breaks out," she said.

The renewed danger comes with 24,000 acres (9,700 hectares) of the upmarket Pacific Palisades in ruins and 14,000 acres of the city of Altadena badly charred.

More than 90,000 evacuees are desperate to get back to their homes -- or even just to see if anything at all survived.

WE MOURN

NUHER LATIF KHAN

(1984 - 2025)

It is with heavy hearts that we share the news of the tragic demise of Mr. Nuher Latif Khan, beloved Founder and Managing Director of Joules Power Limited. Mr. Khan passed away on January 14, 2025 (Innaillahi Wa Inna Ilayhi Raji'un).

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this difficult time and we pray for the eternal peace of his departed soul.

- Expo Group, Bangladesh & Joules Power Limited