

# DHAKA

## Hasina regime silenced media

Shafiqul Alam says previous govt used state agencies to muzzle press

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday said steps must be taken to ensure that no one can directly interfere with the media in the future like it was done during the ousted Sheikh Hasina government.

He said, "Over the past 15 years, intelligence agencies also played a role in silencing newspapers. Journalists would lose their jobs if they received certain phone calls, and news reports had to be removed..."

Shafiqul Alam made these remarks at a discussion titled "Media Reform Proposals: Citizens' Perspectives".

The event was organised by a group named "We Want a Fascism-Free Media" at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the capital's Segunbagicha.

Shafiqul said, "The previous government had the capability to control the media. A single phone call from DGFI, NSI, DB, or a minister was enough. I have heard many stories about how they controlled the media."

Advising to compile writings by columnists who defended fascism rule, he said, "Do not spread hatred against anyone. Punishing someone is not our objective. Conduct research; we aim to expose those who crafted the narratives."

Shafiqul said the previous government even justified murder as acceptable through its narratives. He emphasised the need for collective efforts to prevent the seeds of fascism from being sown again in Bangladesh.

He also said, "Ensuring the application of copyright law is crucial. All journalists must speak out strongly on this issue."

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The fifth floor of this seven-storey building at Hazaribagh in Dhaka caught on fire yesterday afternoon, gutting over a dozen businesses. Inset, fire fighters dousing the blaze.

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HAZARIBAGH FIRE  
Over a dozen businesses burnt to ashes

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire broke out on the fifth floor of a seven-storey building in the capital's Hazaribagh yesterday afternoon, devastating over a dozen businesses and causing significant losses.

The blaze originated around 2:14pm in a Phoenix Leather warehouse on the fifth floor and quickly spread to the sixth and seventh floors, said the fire service headquarters.

After a two-and-a-half-hour effort, 12 firefighting units brought the fire under control by 4:45pm. It was fully extinguished by 7:00pm. Law enforcers, along with army and Border Guard Bangladesh personnel, assisted in fire control and rescue efforts.

Lt Col Tajul Islam Chowdhury, fire service director (operations and maintenance), said the building lacked fire safety measures despite repeated warnings.

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## Polls in 6 months unrealistic: Sarjis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Holding elections within the next six months is unrealistic, said Sarjis Alam, chief organiser of Jatiya Nagarik Committee, yesterday at an event in Panchagarh.

"Our demand should not be limited to holding an election after such a big uprising at the cost of so much blood, lives and everything," he said.

It is simply impossible to update the voter list and reform the judicial system within the six months," he added. However, he said they will not disagree if the next general election is held within a logical time, reports BSS.

Sarjis said the interim government announced that the election would be held by mid-2026, "If they consider holding the election two to four months earlier [early 2026], it would be logical," he said.

Sarjis said the Election Commission, judiciary, and law enforcement agencies need to be reformed to ensure a transparent election.

"We believe that the elections we are hoping for will align with the people's expectations and aspirations, but only after the necessary reforms are



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## TIPU MURDER CASE 26 years on, trial yet to see closure

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

It has been 26 years into the murder of Sayeed Ahmed Tipu, but the trial of the case is yet to see any closure at a Dhaka court due to the non-appearance of prosecution witnesses to testify.

Tipu was the younger brother of former army chief General Aziz Ahmed, who filed the case in 1999 after Tipu was shot dead in the city. Aziz Ahmed gave his deposition before the court on January 6, 2004.

According to the case record, 34 out of 41 prosecution witnesses had given their depositions before the court in the last two decades.

Of the 34, 32 testified between December 10, 2003 and May 22, 2011, while two, including Tipu's brother, Anis Ahmed, testified on April 1, 2021.

The cross examination of Anis Ahmed and one of his acquaintances Syed Shahriar Morshed is yet to be completed as they have not appeared before the court since April 1 of 2021, a court staffer told The Daily Star.

The remaining seven witnesses, however, did not appear before the court to testify since

then. Of them, five are the case's investigative officers who are to give their depositions.

The court issued summons against them multiple times, said the court staffer.

On January 8 this year, the Special Tribunal for Prevention of Public Safety Disturbances of Dhaka issued non-bailable arrest warrants against Anis and Shahriar for failing to comply with multiple court orders.

The prosecution said the witnesses are not attending the trial procedures due to security concerns as the accused are top listed criminals.

"We want to complete the trial, but the witnesses are also not appearing before the court. We do not know why they are not coming to testify," Md Anwarul Islam, public prosecutor, told The Daily Star.

Tipu was shot dead around 7:30pm on March 13, 1999 on Airport Road in the capital's Khilkhet area when he was in a private car, according to the FIR.

Aziz Ahmed filed a murder case with Badda Police Station in this regard on March 13, 1999.

On July 22, 2001, Md Mokbul Hossain, an inspector of the Criminal Investigation Department of police, submitted a charge

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Nature must be at centre of development

Says Rizwana

STAR REPORT

The youth must take the lead in protecting the environment and nature, said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, adviser to the environment and water resources ministries, yesterday.

She was addressing the 15th National Nature Summit, organised by the Notre Dame Nature Study Club at Notre Dame College in Dhaka.

Rizwana said the current development approach needs to change, as unsafe food and water are consequences of past mistakes.

"Nature must be at the centre of development. Protecting air, soil, and water is essential," she said.

Protection of nature is not just the government's responsibility but a duty of every citizen, she added.



## RMG exports reached \$38.48 billion last year

Says EPB data

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh exported \$7.2 billion worth of garments to the US, its single largest export destination, in 2024, according to data from the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

The US accounted for 18.72 percent of Bangladesh's total garment exports last year.

The European Union remained the dominant market, accounting for 50.34 percent of total RMG exports, which amounted to US \$19.37 billion.

In 2024, Bangladesh's Ready-Made Garment (RMG) exports totalled US \$38.48 billion.

The UK contributed US \$4.3 billion, representing an 11.25 percent share.

Within the EU, key markets included Germany, which imported US \$4.83 billion, followed by



### TOTAL RMG EXPORTS

EU \$19.37b (50.34%)
US \$7.2b (18.72%)
UK \$4.3b (11.25%)
Canada \$1.24b (3.23%)

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## NATURE'S SWEET BOUNTY Honey collectors thrive in Jamalpur

JAHIDUL ISLAM NIRAB, Jamalpur

In Jamalpur, the buzz of activity is palpable as honey collectors revel in a bustling season, with beekeeping emerging as both a promising enterprise and a profitable profession.

Entrepreneurs from across the country have flocked to the district, drawn by the high demand for honey and the lucrative returns it offers.

Nestled in the north-central region of Bangladesh, Jamalpur is witnessing a steady increase in honey production. According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), this season has already seen collectors harvest 35,530 kilogrammes of honey from the mustard fields, transforming the landscape into a picturesque expanse of yellow blossoms.

To maximise honey production, beekeepers have established 7,287 beehives throughout the district. These hives not only yield honey but also play a crucial role in enhancing mustard production through pollination. While farmers have cultivated mustard on 41,550 hectares this season, honey is



being harvested from 4,615 hectares of mustard fields.

Across the district's seven upazilas, 45 honey collectors from various parts of the country have installed beehives. Islampur upazila leads the way with 2,812 beehives, followed by Melandah with 1,105, Sarishabari with 1,100, Bakshiganj with 1,050, Madarganj with 780, Dewanganj with 230,

and Jamalpur Sadar with 210.

Kazi Moniruzzaman, a honey collector from Gazipur, has set up 200 beehives in Gaibandha union of Islampur upazila. "I've already collected 1,000 kilogrammes of honey since early December and am hopeful of good profits as the weather remains favorable," he said.

He said he sells honey at prices ranging from Tk 350 to Tk 400 per kilo. In Chhabilapur village of Melandah upazila, Nurul Huda, another honey collector from Satkhira, has set up 190 beehives. This season, he has collected a similar amount of honey.

Similarly, Mosharaf Hossain, from Satkhira, has dedicated 15 years to this profession. He recently collected 45 maunds of honey from Shyampur village in Melandah. "If the government provides soft loans, it will help us sustain and expand this profession," he noted.

Deputy Director of the DAE, Zakia Sultana, said last year, 34 honey collectors set up 5,643 boxes and harvested 29,450 kilogrammes of honey. "This year, the numbers have increased significantly, benefiting both honey collectors and mustard farmers, as pollination boosts crop yields," she said.

Honey collection is expected to continue till the end of January.



Need a dedicated commission to tackle environmental issues  
Prof Rehman Sobhan tells event

UNB, Dhaka

Former caretaker government adviser Professor Rehman Sobhan yesterday attributed environmental degradation to unchecked profit motives and market dominance.

He also urged establishing a dedicated commission to tackle these challenges.

"Environmental protection efforts are being hindered by the lack of proper enforcement of laws... I also called for urgent action to establish a commission dedicated to addressing environmental challenges," he said while inaugurating a special conference celebrating the 25th anniversary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA) at the Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University in Dhaka.

**The rising cost of land, driven by market economics, is causing the encroachment of rivers, wetlands, and forests for housing development.**



Prof Sobhan underscored the need for collective action and suggested forming a specialised commission to address the issue effectively.

He highlighted how the rising cost of land, driven by market economics, is causing the encroachment of rivers, wetlands, and forests for housing development.

Praising the involvement of citizens in environmental movements, Sobhan noted that despite existing progressive laws, their implementation remains inadequate.

He also stressed the importance of unifying different environmental platforms to create collective pressure on the government.

Drawing attention to past development projects, he said the Kaptai Hydropower Project, initially envisioned as a solution to the country's energy crisis, failed to deliver on its promises.

"Instead, it displaced a significant population and caused severe environmental damage. We must refrain

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