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FOREIGN ADVISER'S CHINA TOUR 10 extra years for repaying Chinese loans

Interest rates might be lowered

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Beijing has agreed in principle to extend the repayment period for Chinese loans and assured Dhaka it will look into the request to lower the interest rate to ease Bangladesh's foreign debt repayment pressure.

China is Bangladesh's fourth-largest lender after Japan, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, with total loans disbursed since 1975 coming to \$7.5 billion.

The development came yesterday during Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain's bilateral meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on his four-day tour of China at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing.

At the meeting, Hossain requested lowering the interest rate on Chinese loans from 2.3 percent to 1 percent, waiving the commitment

- 1 Bangladeshi goods to get duty-free access to China for 3 yrs after LDC graduation
- 2 Dhaka urges Beijing to ramp up concessional loans, grants and the number of projects
- 3 Both sides discussed the financing of metro rail projects

and management fees and extending the loan repayment period from 20 years to 30 years for both the preferential buyer's credit and government concessional loans.

Praising Bangladesh's good track record in repayment, Wang agreed to extend the maturity period for loans provided to the country and also assured of looking into the request of lowering the interest rate on the loans, according to a statement from the Bangladesh foreign ministry.

China places Bangladesh at a very important position in her neighbourhood diplomacy, the statement said quoting Wang as saying.

Also yesterday, Hossain held a meeting with Luo Zhaohui, the chairman of the China International Development Cooperation Agency, about Chinese loans.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Bangladesh Railway uses a digger to destroy around 100 shanties built on its land at Karwan Bazar in the capital during an eviction drive yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

PHOTO ON PAGE 12

A judicial council to pick SC judges

Govt issues ordinance

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The interim government has issued an ordinance for recruitment of competent judges in the two Supreme Court divisions through a seven-member Supreme Judicial Appointment Council led by the chief justice.

Even though the constitution mandates formulating a law for appointments of judges in the appellate and High Court divisions, none of the previous governments did it.

Yesterday, President Mohammed Shahabuddin issued the Supreme Court Judge Appointment Ordinance, 2025. It says that an SC judge cannot be younger than 45.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

DRAFT DATA LAW Privacy still under threat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government released the draft of the Personal Data Protection Ordinance, 2025, yesterday, and it appears that it retains some of the clauses of its Awami League era predecessor that had drawn criticism.

Once enacted, the law is supposed to afford citizens the right to know what personal information is being collected by any

SEE PAGE 2 COL 7

Trump pauses US aid for 90 days

Executive orders target int'l
treaties, threaten trade wars

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump began his first full day in office yesterday, riding a wave of executive orders signed just hours after his inauguration on everything from immigration to the environment and culture wars.

He used his first hours back in the White House to begin upending the global order, withdrawing the US from international climate and tax agreements, and culture wars.



SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

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JOYPURHAT BORDER BSF's bid to build fence foiled again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) yesterday stopped the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) from putting up a barbed wire fence at the Uchna border area in Joypurhat's Panchbibi upazila.

The BSF tried to erect the fence within 30 yards of the international zero point, violating border agreements, so the attempt was foiled, a BGB official told this newspaper.

According to local sources, BSF personnel from the Chakgopal Camp began building the fence early in the morning amid dense fog, just 25 to 30 yards inside the border on the Indian side, opposite the Bangladeshi land that is under the jurisdiction of the 20-BGB Hatkhola Border Outpost (BOP).

Upon noticing the activity, BGB personnel intervened, prompting the BSF to withdraw their materials and leave the site, Lt Col Nahid Newaz, commander of the 20 BGB Battalion, told this newspaper.

"BSF's attempt to construct a fence so close to Zero Point was a clear violation of international border laws," he said.

BGB acted promptly to prevent the violation, and a flag meeting was offered to the BSF at the company commander level to resolve the matter, he added.

This is not the first border-related incident in Joypurhat this month.

On January 13, BSF personnel fired a blank shot near the Bhuidoba border at Main Pillar 282, Sub-Pillar 43. BGB sources confirmed the incident at the time, saying that BSF admitted firing at suspected smugglers. However, no injuries were reported.

Despite these events, BGB officials have assured that the situation along the border remains calm, with efforts ongoing to maintain peace and prevent further tension, said the BGB officials.

10 extra years for repaying Chinese loans

FROM PAGE 1

Hossain requested Luo to ramp up concessional loans and grants and the number of projects China funds in Bangladesh. Luo responded positively and sought a list of priority projects from Bangladesh.

Luo said China may consider larger projects in Bangladesh, with some project funds extended as grants. As a result, the average interest rate of Chinese loans will go down, he said.

Both sides also discussed the financing of projects in metro rail and the Southern Infrastructure Development Initiative (SIDI) in Bangladesh.

Over at Hossain's bilateral meeting with the Chinese foreign minister, Beijing assured of continued duty-free and quota-free access to Bangladeshi products for

three years after graduation from the least-developed country bracket in 2026.

Wang also conveyed China's decision to designate three to four recognised hospitals in Kunming for treatment of Bangladeshi patients.

He also welcomed Bangladesh's proposal of setting up a specialised tertiary-level Chinese hospital in Dhaka as a gesture of goodwill on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh-China diplomatic relations.

Both sides conveyed their readiness to organise a host of activities to mark the occasion.

Wang requested Bangladesh to consider joining Chinese President Xi Jinping's three global initiatives: the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative

and the Global Civilisation Initiative.

In response, Bangladesh conveyed their intention to examine the proposals and to remain engaged with China in deliberations on the issues.

Wang reaffirmed that China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bangladesh and reiterated continued Chinese support for the stability, reforms, democratic transition and development initiatives of Bangladesh.

Recognising Bangladesh's strategic position, the two sides emphasised continued cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.

China wants to see Bangladesh's economic development in pace with their own development and assured China's continued

support for the projects conducive to the livelihood of the people of Bangladesh, Wang said.

The two sides expressed their willingness to work closely on proposed Chinese-funded projects: the Dasherkandi sewage treatment plant, the upgradation and modernisation of Mongla Port and the establishment of digital connectivity and 4G expansion.

The Chinese side was very positive about the request for lowering the interest rate and financial support, an official of the foreign adviser's delegation told the correspondent from Beijing.

"They have not insisted on their issues of GDI and GSI, but they want us to be with them for inclusive development," he said.

Bangladesh sought

detailed information on China's plan to build a mega hydropower dam across the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Tibet.

The Chinese side said they would not consume or withdraw any water and thus the lower riparian countries will not be affected, the official said, adding that there was no discussion on the Teesta river management project.

Both leaders discussed the Rohingya crisis and reaffirmed their shared commitment to work on a roadmap to finding a durable solution to the issue, according to the foreign ministry statement.

Wang reassured China's continued engagement with Myanmar to address the situation and promote regional stability.

Hossain reiterated Bangladesh's firm

commitment to the 'One China Principle' and unwavering support for UNGA Resolution 2758.

The two countries signed the implementation plan for the memorandum of understanding on the exchange of hydrological information on the Yaluzangbu-Jamuna rivers.

Hossain also met with Liu Jianchao, the minister of the international department of the Chinese Communist Party, yesterday to discuss Chinese-funded development projects in Bangladesh.

Liu reaffirmed China's continued support for the interim government and peaceful transition to democracy through a free, fair and participatory election.

A judicial council to pick SC judges

FROM PAGE 1

Members of the appointment council are the most senior and a retired judge of the Appellate Division, two senior judges from the High Court Division, the attorney general and a professor of law or legal expert nominated by the chief justice.

The SC registrar general will act as the secretary of the council ex-officio. The registrar general's office must render necessary secretarial assistance for the council, according to the ordinance on which a gazette notification was issued yesterday.

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul yesterday told reporters that people for years wanted appointment of experienced, efficient, non-partisan and genuinely qualified individuals as judges through a transparent process.

"I hope that the judges will now be appointed to the Supreme Court through a transparent and accountable process," he said.

The council will collect the names of potential candidates, he said.

"At the same time, there is a system allowing any person, any lawyer, to apply [for the posts] or nominate someone. The council will conduct interviews after the initial scrutiny."

The law adviser hoped that the next appointments to the post of judges in the High Court will be given in this process.

Under the previous administration, he said, "there was no redress for people. The reason for this was that political governments appointed judges to the High Court... purely on partisan considerations. A former judge had commented... that the appointments of High Court judges had been catastrophic."

"If competent and impartial persons are not appointed as judges in a transparent process in the High Court, then the question of human rights of the country's 17 crore people remains unresolved."

The ordinance states that the qualifications of the candidates for the posts of SC judges will be considered by the council as their minimum qualifications have already been

mentioned in articles 95 and 98 of the constitution.

The council will consider the candidate's educational qualifications, professional skills, experience, publications and training; information relating to the conviction of a candidate in a criminal case; special knowledge and skills of the candidates in a particular area of law; overall knowledge, wisdom, honesty, reputation, respect for law and other relevant matters, according to the ordinance.

The council will consider the number of cases disposed of by an additional HC judge; his or her quality of judicial orders and decisions; court management capacity; overall efficiency; honesty; reputation and relevant matters as qualifications for his or her appointment of a permanent HC judge.

It will evaluate the seniority of an HC judge; number of cases disposed of by him or her; his or her quality of judicial orders and decisions; court management capacity; overall efficiency; honesty; reputation and relevant matters as a judge of the country's 17 crore people remains unresolved."

The ordinance states that the qualifications of the candidates for the posts of SC judges will be considered by the council as their minimum qualifications have already been

mentioned in articles 95 and 98 of the constitution.

All meetings of the council will be held at the time and place fixed by its chairperson, the chief justice.

A meeting of the council will be convened at least two months before the expiry of the appointment of an additional judge of the HC.

The quorum for a meeting of the council will be formed in the presence of at least five members.

The council will convene applications from the candidates for the posts of additional judges of the HC through a public circular.

For the purpose of this ordinance, the government can in consultation with the council make rules.

The chief justice will forward the recommendations made by the council to the president in accordance with Article 95(1) of the constitution.

The president will pick the judge from the individuals recommended by the council within 15 days.

If the president disagrees with the advice of the chief justice, he may refer the

matter to the chief justice for review, mentioning the relevant information and reasons, according to the ordinance.

On November 28 last year, the SC sent a proposal to the law ministry to incorporate the provision for constituting the council to select competent candidates for the judges' posts in the Appellate and High Court divisions.

The council, at the request of the president, will issue a public notice inviting applications from the candidates, according to the proposed ordinance.

After receiving applications, the council will send recommendations to the president for the appointment of judges under articles 95 and 98 of the constitution, the SC said in the proposal.

On December 11 last year, the Judiciary Reform Commission submitted a preliminary report to the government suggesting to constitute a nine-member commission led by the chief justice for the appointment of SC judges to ensure the selection of duly qualified people.

STUDENTS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

22 hurt in scuffle at its central office 2 groups blame each other

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 22 people were injured in a scuffle between two groups of Students Against Discrimination at its central office in the capital's Bangla Motor.

Both groups blamed each other for the incident that took place around 4:00pm.

Some student activists from Jatrabari area alleged that they were "beaten up" by their leaders on the second floor of the Rupayan Trade Centre.

However, the central committee said a "misguided group" from Jatrabari "forcibly" closed the office gate and attacked the executive members, leaving central committee member Nayeem Abedin injured.

Al Amin, a Jatrabari unit activist, said they went to the central office "seeking justice" as they were beaten up by a group of the platform during a meeting in Jatrabari on Monday.

Yesterday's incident left at least 21 activists of the group from Jatrabari injured, and three of them are taking treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The group of activists reached the central office at Bangla Motor around 3:00pm, and sat in front of Rupayan Trade Centre, demanding justice for the attack on them in Jatrabari. They also carried placards and chanted slogans.

"At about 4:00pm, some central leaders invited us to the office and as we went inside, they started beating us, closing the shutters of the office," said Al Amin, adding that female activists were also attacked.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



Thousands of Beximco Group workers hold a rally at Sunsite of Gazipur's Kashimpur yesterday, demanding the reopening of 16 factories inside the Beximco Industrial Park. They also demanded payment of their dues.

PHOTO: MONJURUL HAQUE

Thousands of workers demand reopening of 16 Beximco factories

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gazipur*

Thousands of workers held a mass rally yesterday in Gazipur, demanding the reopening of all 16 factories which were shut down within the Beximco Industrial Park.

The workers also called for payment of outstanding salaries at the rally at Sunsite in Kashimpur's Sreepur.

The rally started around 2:30pm, said Abu Taleb, Assistant Superintendent of Police for Gazipur Industrial Police 2 (Konabari Zone).

Witnesses said workers chanted slogans like: "We want work, not alms. We want to live with our families. Open the factories."

Taslima Khatun, a worker, said, "We want back our jobs. They cannot close the factories leaving fifty thousand of us jobless."

The rally was concluded peacefully around 5:00pm.

Last year, Beximco laid off nearly 40,000 workers of 16 apparel units, citing a lack of export orders for its garment and textile factories. Layoff notices were issued on

December 15, 2024, taking effect the next day.

The layoffs affected over 57% of Beximco's workforce.

Labour Secretary AHM Shafiquzzaman stated on January 14 that the government is working to find jobs for the affected workers in factories under the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority and Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority.

The workers also called for payment of outstanding salaries at the rally at Sunsite in Kashimpur's Sreepur.

On January 20, a state advisory council met at the Bangladesh Secretariat to discuss selling the 16 factories, preferably to foreign entrepreneurs, to repay Tk 50,000 crore in bank loans owed by Beximco.

Over half of these loans have become non-performing, according to Bangladesh Bank data from November 2024. However, the council deferred its decision, pending further scrutiny of the group's financial statements.

19 Rohingyas rescued, three traffickers held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *COX'S BAZAR*

Nineteen Rohingya people were rescued and three alleged members of a human trafficking gang arrested in Kachhpia area of Cox's Bazar's Teknaf early yesterday.

A police team, led by Sub-Inspector of Teknaf Police Station Badui Alam, carried out the operation around 3:00am.

All the arrestees -- Jafar Alam, 30, Mujib Ullah, 32, and Hamid Ullah, 32 -- are residents of East Kachhpia in Teknaf, said Mohammad Rahmat Ullah, superintendent of police in Cox's Bazar.

"A case has been filed under the Human Trafficking Prevention and Suppression Act with Teknaf Police Station," he said, adding that drives against traffickers will continue.

Ex-army man's wife murdered at home in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

A retired army personnel's wife was murdered at his residence in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila early yesterday.

The victim, Shahnaz Parvin Lucky, 50, was alone in the house when the incident took place during the early hours in Salimpur village of Nilganj union. Her husband, Abul Kalam Azad, was not present as he was visiting a relative.

Shah Alam, the victim's brother-in-law, said a gang of robbers slit her throat after gagging and tying her up. Later, they ransacked the house and looted valuables.

He said he found the back door of the house open around 8:00am. Upon entering, he discovered the scene -- Shahnaz's lifeless body was on the floor with her hands and feet tied up and her mouth gagged.

He informed police, who later recovered the body from the spot. "The body has been sent to Patuakhali Medical College Hospital for autopsy."

We are investigating the incident, and necessary legal actions are underway," said Jewel Islam, officer-in-charge of Kalapara Police Station.

IO testifies at court in Niko graft case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The investigation officer yesterday gave a partial statement before a Dhaka court in Niko graft case filed against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and seven others.

Judge Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun of the Special Judge's Court-5 of Dhaka recorded the statement of Saheedur Rahman, the then deputy director of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), for over an hour.

The judge then fixed January 29 for the next hearing of the case. On that date, the court will record the rest of the statement of the IO.

In December 2007, the ACC 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.

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Workers preparing stalls for the upcoming Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday. Inset, CCTV cameras being installed in the TSC area for security. The month-long book fair is going to begin on February 1.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

AS Mahmud's
21st death
anniversary
today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 21st anniversary of death of AS Mahmud, the founding managing director of Mediaworld Ltd, the owning company of The Daily Star, and the founder chairman of Ekushey Television (ETV).

AS Mahmud, also one of the leading businessmen of the country, passed away on this day in London.

AS Mahmud was born into an illustrious family in Sylhet on July 10, 1933. He graduated in economics from Dhaka University in 1954 and started his career as an oil company executive in Burma Shell.

He was also the chairman of Reliance Insurance Company Ltd, a director of Infrastructure Development Company Ltd, jointly financed by the government and the World

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Misinformation rise by 58pc in 2024: Dismislab

Sparks communal tension, distrust across Bangladesh-India borders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fact-checking organisations in Bangladesh debunked 58 percent more content in 2024 compared to the previous year, with misinformation skyrocketing during August. This is according to Dismislab's yearly roundup report, released yesterday.

Fact-checkers identified and verified over 3,000 unique pieces of false or misleading information that went viral, the report said.

The Awami League and its affiliated bodies topped the list of institutions or organisations whose names appeared in misinformation throughout 2024, while India topped the list of countries featured in such misinformation.

Indian actors and pro Awami League social media users were both prominent in spreading misinformation, the report found.

A third of all misinformation spread was about politics, followed by religion.

Disinformation related to communal tension and religious hatred had already been on the rise since August, but it took on a new dimension in November and December.

In December, a third of the fact-check reports published by fact-checking organisations about Bangladesh focused on religious topics.

"On November 5, an anti ISKCON Facebook post in the port city of Chittagong led to a clash, injuring seven police officers and five members of the army," said the report.

On November 26, Chinmoy Krishna Das, spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagaran Jote, was arrested on

charges of sedition. This event triggered a spate of misinformation.

"Several fake quotes attributed to Chinmoy Krishna Das were circulated using fake photocards in the name of mainstream media houses. Because Chinmoy was previously associated with ISKCON, false information about the organisation also circulated. For example, it was falsely claimed that weapons were recovered from the ISKCON temple in the

- ➊ Over 3,000 claims debunked
- ➋ Indian actors, pro-AL social media spreading misinformation
- ➌ Religious misinformation spike after Chinmoy arrest
- ➍ One-third misinfo political in nature
- ➎ Student advisers targeted

eastern Bangladesh district of Sylhet, or that a supermarket and one of the leading inter-district transport companies had funded the group," the report added.

In April 2024, as India entered its Lok Sabha elections, false claims of religious hatred and persecution spread on social media in both India and Bangladesh.

After August 5, false information about minority attacks and communal tension

spread, fuelling division and unrest, said the report.

India giving shelter to Sheikh Hasina also led to a flurry of misinformation.

"A number of claims went as far as to propagate that Indians have been employed in the Bangladesh police force or that a director of Bangladesh Bank is an Indian citizen. During the student movement, it was falsely claimed that the Indian army was entering Bangladesh or that Indian aircrafts were stationed at Bangladesh air bases," the report said.

After the fall of the Awami League government, false claims circulated that Indian soldiers were withdrawing from Bangladesh.

Indian mainstream media also spread false claims that the Pakistani army was patrolling in Bangladesh.

When a cargo ship from Pakistan arrived at a Bangladeshi port for the first time since 1971, fake news began spreading that the vessel was carrying weapons.

The report said that all of this misinformation increased distrust on both sides of the border.

Pro-Awami League social media users disseminated false information, claiming that the leaders and activists of BCL and Juba League who attacked protesters with firearms were actually members of Islami Chhatra Shibir, the report said.

"One piece of misinformation after another hit social media concerning the three student

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Seize Anisul's
income tax
documents
Court passes order

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the seizure of income tax documents of former law minister Anisul Huq in a case filed for amassing wealth beyond his known sources of income.

The court also ordered the seizure and confiscation of moveable and immoveable properties of AM Naimur Rahman Durjoy, former captain of the Bangladesh National Cricket Team and former Awami League lawmaker from Manikganj-1 constituency, in connection with corruption allegations.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Take in more Rohingyas for rehabilitation Home adviser urges US

UNB, Dhaka

Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury has called on the United States to take in more Rohingyas from Bangladesh for rehabilitation.

He made the request during a meeting with the US Embassy's Charge d'Affaires in Bangladesh, Tracey Ann Jacobson, at the Secretariat yesterday.

Praising the US for its humanitarian aid and rehabilitation efforts for the Rohingyas, the adviser said, "The US has already rehabilitated some Rohingyas..."

Jacobson noted that USAID, a US-based development organisation, has been collaborating with local Bangladeshi NGOs to improve the living standards of the Rohingyas. "The US has already rehabilitated about 17,000 Rohingyas and this process is going on."

The bilateral meeting covered several topics, including security, counterterrorism, the Rohingya crisis, law enforcement cooperation, police reforms, border issues, minority rights and agriculture.

Terming the US a key development partner, the adviser acknowledged its continued support in addressing terrorism and security challenges.



The Public Works Department started an eviction drive through Pallabi Slum yesterday, to recover 15 acres of land that had been under the control of Elias Uddin Mollah, a former Awami League lawmaker, and his family for decades.

PHOTO: STAR

TOP CRIMINALS

DMP to seek their bail cancellation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police has planned to apply for the cancellation of bail for top criminals recently released from long-term imprisonment.

Police allege that these individuals have resumed criminal activities, including extortion and gang operations, following their release.

DMP high-ups disclosed the development during a meeting with the newly elected executive committee of the Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh yesterday.

"It's unfortunate that these criminals have not changed despite spending years in prison. After their release, they've resumed the same activities as before," said SM Sazzat Ali, commissioner of the DMP.

We are collecting evidence against these freed criminals, including Jasim, known as 'Benazir's Cashier,' as well as Subrata Bain, Pichchi Helal, and Emon. We will write to cancel their bail.

SM MD NAZRUL ISLAM
DMP Additional Commissioner
(Crime and Operations)

been in prison for over a decade and a half.

UNIFIED POLICE UNIFORM APPROVED
At the meeting, DMP boss Sazzat Ali also

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

CONTESTING POLLS

Disqualify those convicted by ICT Says Badiul Alam Majumdar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Individuals accused and convicted by the International Crimes Tribunal, as well as those involved in enforced disappearances, should be disqualified from contesting elections, said Electoral Reform Commission Chairman Badiul Alam Majumdar yesterday.

Speaking at a discussion organised by the Reporters' Forum for Election and Democracy (RFED) at the Election Commission (EC) Bhaban yesterday, he said, "The intention is not to keep anyone away from the elections. However, those who committed serious crimes like killing students and the public during movements, fugitive defendants, and those who played a major role in subverting the electoral system should be barred from contesting polls."

"No one is above responsibility in a democratic state. If the Election Commission makes a mistake, violates the constitution, or breaks its oath, they will be held accountable," he said.

Criticising previous governments, he said, "The government [in the past] has done whatever it wanted, without paying attention to the Election Commission. We have established the authority so that the Election Commission cannot act arbitrarily."

Badiul also called for a "neutral investigation commission" to probe the elections of 2014, 2018, and 2024, ensuring those involved in electoral fraud face justice.

"If the election commissions at that time committed wrongdoing, they too should face justice. No one wants to return to the past, and we do not want a repetition of fraudulent elections. The electoral process must be freed from

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

BANGLADESH
EU, UN Women
sign deal on
gender equality
STAR REPORT

The European Union and UN Women have signed a partnership agreement to prevent sexual and gender-based violence in Bangladesh, according to a press release.

This aligns with the Bangladesh government's commitment to achieving "a society without violence against women and children by 2025," as outlined in the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Children (2018-2030).

The partnership will allow UN Women to advocate for the government to fulfill its commitments to international gender equality and human rights standards.



Harun Molla collects and bundles dry straw and leaves from the field before carrying them home to feed his domesticated animals. The photo was taken at Kapurakathi village in Jhalakathi yesterday. PHOTO: TITU DAS



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SL No	Tender Reference No	Package Description	Tender ID No and Closing Date
1.	46.06.0000.314.007.116.2024	Works for supply of coolant and also servicing work of radiator & Injector of 1750 KVA generator at Kalurghat IRP & Booster Station, Chattogram WASA, Chattogram.	1065837 04-Feb-2025 11:30

SPR 7
21/1/25

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GD-232

Expression of Interest (EOI)
Event Management Company for
Women's Bangladesh Premier League (WBPL) T20 2025

Bangladesh Cricket Board
Date: 22nd January 2025

The Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) Governing Council under the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) invites Expressions of Interest (EOI) from qualified Event Management Companies to organize and execute the inaugural edition of the Women's Bangladesh Premier League (WBPL) T20 in 2025.

The selected company will manage the entire event, including operations such as branding for grounds, TV productions, and other event-related activities. Eligible companies must have a proven track record in managing similar large-scale events and may operate independently or collaborate with the BPL Governing Council.

Eligibility Criteria:

- a) Firms, Joint Ventures, or Companies with commercial ties to Bangladesh are eligible.
- b) Companies related to Tobacco, Alcohol (surrogated/non-surrogated), Betting, or Online Betting are ineligible.
- c) Entities with unresolved disputes or prior non-compliance with BCB or ICC are not eligible.

Required Documents:

- 01. Company and Directors' /Owners' Profiles.
- 02. Updated Auditor's Report (individual reports for consortiums).
- 03. Bank Solvency Certificate and Bank Statement.
- 04. Memorandum and Articles of Association with Incorporation Certificate.
- 05. Business Identification Number (BIN), Trade License, and Tax Identification Number (TIN).
- 06. Notarized Consortium Agreement (if applicable).

EOI Submission:

- a) General Guidelines for EOI preparation are available at BCB Management Office, Mirpur, Dhaka, or online at www.tigercricket.com.bd and www.bplt20.com.bd.
- b) EOs, along with Financial Proposals, must be submitted to the BPL Governing Council Office at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Dhaka, by 5:00 PM BST on 5th February 2025.

The BCB reserves the right to accept or reject any or all offers at its sole discretion without assigning any reason. The BCB also reserves the right to cancel the entire EOI process and / or modify, add or alter the terms of the document and/ or the conditions for EOI by issuing an addendum(s) at any time prior to the submission of the EOI.

Chief Executive Officer
Bangladesh Cricket Board
Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh

Office of the Registrar
Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University
Trishal, Mymensingh-2224, Bangladesh
Phone: 02-996676404, PABX: 210



রেজিস্ট্রারের কার্যালয়
জাতীয় কবি কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
ঠিশাল, ময়মনসিংহ-২২২৪, বাংলাদেশ
ফোন: ০২-৯৯৬৬৭৬৪০৪, PABX: ২১০

আরক নং: জাককান্সি/রেজি/নবিজনি/১৬৩২/২২/১২০

তারিখ: ২০/০১/২০২৫ইং

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এই বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের বিধি মোতাবেক প্রদেয় বেতন ও অন্যান্য আর্থিক সুবিধাসহ নিম্নলিখিত ছায়ী পদে নিয়োগকর্ত্তা বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিকদের নিকট থেকে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের নির্ধারিত ফরমে দরবার্ষ আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

ক্র. নং	পদের নাম ও বেতন ক্ষেত্র	পদের সংখ্যা	বর্বর (বছর)
০১।	পরিচালক (পরিকল্পনা ও উন্নয়ন) বেতন ক্ষেত্র-৩য় শ্রেণি (৫৬৫০০-৯৮৮০০/-) পরিকল্পনা, উন্নয়ন ও ওর্কার্স সংগ্রহ	০১টি	অন্যর্থ ৫০ বছর

উপরোক্ত পদের জন্য আবেদনপত্র রেজিস্ট্রার, জাতীয় কবি কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ঠিশাল, ময়মনসিংহ-২২২৪ বরাবরে আগামী ২০/০২/২০২৫ তারিখ বিকাল ৫:০০ ঘটকার মধ্যে অবশ্যই পৌছাতে হবে। অগ্রহী প্রার্থীদের নির্ধারিত ফরম, নিয়োগপত্রের যোগাযোগ ও অভিজ্ঞতা এবং অন্যান্য শর্তবিলী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের রেজিস্ট্রার অফিস থেকে সংগ্রহ অথবা ১০-টাকা মূল্যের অবশ্যই ডাকটিকেটসহ অর্থেকারী ওয়েবসাইট www.jknniu.edu.bd থেকে ডাউনলোড করা যাবে অথবা ১০-টাকা মূল্যের অবশ্যই ডাকটিকেটসহ নিয়ার্থ পত্র যোগাযোগের ঠিকানা সংযোগ ফেরত থাক প্রেরণে মাধ্যমে নির্ধারিত ফরম ও আবেদন করার শর্তবিলী সংগ্রহ করা যাবে। ডাকযোগে আবেদন ফরম সংগ্রহের ক্ষেত্রে আহ্বান উপর পদের নাম উল্লেখ করতে হবে।

ভাইস-চ্যাপেলের মহোদয়ের অন্যান্য পত্র

(প্রেরণের ত. তে। মজিনুর রহমান)

রেজিস্ট্রার (ভারতোগ্রুপ)

জাতীয় কবি কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

ঠিশাল, ময়মনসিংহ-২২২৪।

ফোন: ০২-৯৯৬৬৭৬৪০৪

Reference: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

GD-217

Career Opportunity

UATAN Knitting & Dyeing Ltd. (Garments Division) located at Gazipur is looking for the position of **General Manager-Maintenance**, No. of Vacancy- 01, Experience - Minimum 12 years, Education-Bachelor of Engineering in Electronics from any reputed University, Age at least 45 years, Basic Salary-Tk. 5,50,000/-House Rent-Tk. 85,000/-Conveyance-Tk.15,000/-

Please apply for the above position with detailed CV and recent photographs within 15 (Fifteen) days to- sabera@utahgroup.net

Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology

141-142, Love Road, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka-1208
Phone: 8870422, PABX-103, 107, 348; Web: www.aust.edu

VACANCY

Applications are invited from suitable eligible Bangladeshi candidates for the posts of 1) **Senior Software Engineer** 2) **Software Engineer** at Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology. The details regarding the Qualifications, Experience, Application System and other information are available in the AUST website (www.aust.edu). The last date of application is February 10, 2025 (Monday).

GD-217

DMP to seek their bail

FROM PAGE 3

shared that all units of the Bangladesh Police will adopt a unified uniform. Previously, different units had distinct uniforms.

The decision on new uniforms for the Police, Rapid Action Battalion, and Ansar was finalised during a meeting on Monday.

"The new uniforms will eliminate unit-specific variations and create a cohesive appearance for the force," said Sazzat Ali, adding the new dress is now pending final approval from the chief adviser.

Currently, the Bangladesh Police employs over 200,000 members and 19,000 civilian staff.

REGULATING BATTERY-OPERATED RICKSHAWS

The rapid proliferation of battery-operated rickshaws

regulate the number of battery-operated rickshaws through a licensing system," he said.

The proposal includes issuing licences at a nominal fee of Tk 100 200

to distinguish authorised vehicles from unauthorised ones.

FUGITIVE EX-OC SHAH ALAM

The DMP is intensifying efforts to apprehend Shah Alam, the former officer in-charge (OC) of Uttara East Police Station, who escaped custody on January 9, said Commissioner Sazzat.

Currently, the Bangladesh Police employs over 200,000 members and 19,000 civilian staff.

Seize Anisul's

OC Md Mohibullah was withdrawn, and ASI Sajjad Hossain was suspended.

"The responsible officers showed unwarranted sympathy by keeping him in a police officer's room. This incident has been taken seriously, and steps are being taken to prevent such lapses in the future," said the commissioner.

Seize Anisul's

FROM PAGE 3

Court passed the order after Anti-Corruption Commission submitted two separate applications.

Anisul had deposited Tk 349.15 crore in 29 bank accounts and withdrawn Tk 316.48 crore, all of which are suspicious transactions, according to the ACC.

The ACC also said Durjoy has a 2,523 sq. feet flat in Lalmaia, three cars, and wealth of Tk 11.21 crore, inconsistent with his income. Durjoy allegedly abused his power and took Tk 4.22 crore from Manikganj Power Generation Ltd.

The DMP boss suspects he may have fled to India or another neighboring country.

Following the incident, Uttara East Police Station

Office of the Chief Engineer
University of Dhaka

Fax: 88-02-55167810
E-mail: vcoffice@du.ac.bd
registrar@du.ac.bd

Invitation for e-GP Tender Notice (OTM)

Dated: 21/01/2025

Memo No. 4069(2)/Engg.

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	1059816	proku/civi l/DU/ 2024-25/08	Supply of Utensils for the Dining and Canteen of the newly constructed 11-Storyed Building for 1000 Students at Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman Hall, University of Dhaka	05-02-2025 16:30	06-02-2025 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no office/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (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 branches. Further information and guidance are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-G

Trump pauses US aid for 90 days

FROM PAGE 1
threatening China with tariffs over social media platform TikTok and threatening punitive duties on neighbours Canada and Mexico.

He also signed an executive order declaring a 90-day pause in the disbursement of US foreign development assistance, effectively leaving millions of dollars in aid in limbo.

The aid suspension has the potential to worsen the humanitarian situation for people dependent on aid like the Palestinians in Gaza and the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The decision is now depends on Marco Rubio, who was confirmed as secretary of state by the Senate as the first cabinet member of the new Trump administration.

Signed in front of roaring supporters at an arena and then later in the Oval Office, the long list of policy changes offered a vivid symbol of Trump's increased preparedness versus eight years prior,

when he entered the White House with zero governing experience.

The Republican said in a speech after taking the oath at the Capitol -- in a ceremony held indoors due to freezing weather -- that "America's decline is over" after four years of Democrat Joe Biden's presidency, pledging "the golden age of America begins right now."

But after the pomp and ceremony, it was the showman Trump of his first term -- along with the sometimes strongman-style rhetoric -- who was on display later in the day.

Back in the Oval Office, he held an impromptu 50-minute press conference as he signed more orders -- including one pardoning around 1,500 Capitol rioters.

They were charged for taking part in the assault on Congress on January 6, 2021 by thousands of Trump supporters seeking to stop certification of Biden's election victory.

"We hope they come out tonight frankly," Trump said. "They're expecting it."

He also announced plans to weed out some 1,000 opponents from the US government.

He signed orders declaring a national emergency at the Mexican border and said he would deploy US troops to tackle illegal immigration -- a key campaign issue that drove his election victory over Kamala Harris.

The returning president often struck a nationalistic tone, pledging to impose trade tariffs, rename the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America," and take "back" the Panama Canal, which has been controlled by the Central American country since 1999.

But he played down his earlier promises to get a peace agreement in Ukraine before taking office.

He confirmed he would meet Vladimir Putin and said Putin was "destroying Russia" by not making a

deal to end the war.

MONDAY'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS

However, the legal backlash to Trump's second term has begun, with rights groups and state governments firing an early salvo against the Republican's day-one decision to overhaul birthright citizenship.

Late on Monday, organisations including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Legal Defense Fund filed a lawsuit calling Trump's actions unconstitutional, in a case that is likely to test the limits of his executive power.

Yesterday, 18 states also filed a similar lawsuit seeking to ground the order.

Trump signed a record 26 executive orders on Monday. According to White House officials, those 26 executive orders were among the 42 presidential actions Trump took on his first day, including memoranda and proclamations.

Among the executive orders Trump signed with a flourish in front of a cheering crowd was the "ending weaponisation" of government against political opponents.

The US president also signed orders targeting automatic citizenship for US-born children of immigrants in the country illegally.

He rescinded executive orders that had promoted diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and promoted rights for LGBTQ+ people and racial minorities, fulfilling promises to curtail protections for the most marginalized Americans.

The Republican leader also declared a "national energy emergency" to expand drilling in the world's top oil and gas producer, said he would scrap vehicle emissions standards that amount to an "electric vehicle mandate," and vowed to halt offshore wind farms, a frequent target of his scorn.

He reversed an executive order issued by Biden that moved to lift the US designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism.

On trade, the US president punted on a campaign pledge to issue tariffs on Canada and Mexico on day one of his new administration.

However, he said he would issue the new tariffs on the North American

neighbours on 1 February in what would mark an extraordinary about-face in US trade policy that would considerably raise prices for American consumers.

"We are thinking in terms of 25% on Mexico and Canada because they're allowing vast numbers of people ... to come in, and I'm not going to come in," Trump said. "I think we'll do it Feb 1."

Mexico was the US's largest trading partner in 2023 with a total two-way goods trade of \$807bn, an amount that surpassed US trade with China, according to the US State Department.

"Protectionism" leads nowhere and there are no winners in a trade war," Ding said, without mentioning Trump directly.

Trump is making history -- as both the oldest president ever to take office and as the first felon, after a conviction related to paying a porn star hush money during his first presidential run.

He is also just the second president in US history to return to power after being voted out, after Grover Cleveland in 1893.

22 hurt in scuffle

FROM PAGE 2

Al Amin alleged that several leaders, including Rifat Rashid, Naveem Abedin, Mahin Sarkar, carried out the attack on them.

Hasnat Abdullah, convenor of the Students Against Discrimination, reached the spot after the incident and appealed the Jatrabari activists.

Rifat Rashid, Hasnat Abdullah, and the platform's spokesperson Umama Fateme, did not pick their phones when called for comments.

Meanwhile, central committee of the student movement, in a statement last night said some "misguided" people went to the central office and started chanting "unpleasant" slogans.

At one point, they "forcibly" closed the office gate. Grasping the gravity of the situation, central executive committee members Rifat Rashid, Ahnaf Sayeed Khan, Naveem Abedin and Asad Bin Majumder.

Meanwhile, some Jatrabari activists went to the central office in Bangla Motor at around 8:20pm, seeking justice.

Rest assured that we will support you

FROM PAGE 1

reform agenda and discussed issues of mutual interest.

He also urged the chancellor to encourage German businesses to invest in Bangladesh, inviting a delegation to explore opportunities in Dhaka, stating, "We can be your factory."

Yunus sought Germany's backing for the establishment of a United Nations supervised safe zone for Rohingyas in Myanmar's Rakhine State, said CA's Deputy Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad Majumder.

The two leaders also discussed a wide range of topics, including the circumstances surrounding the July uprising, regional cooperation, and the potential of Nepalese hydroelectric power to support South Asia's renewable energy transition.

Yunus also reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to SAARC and its efforts to revive the regional platform.

On the government's reform initiatives, Yunus explained that a commission under his leadership is working to build consensus among political parties on key recommendations proposed by six reform commissions.

Once consensus is reached, the political parties will sign a 'July Charter,' inspired by the democratic spirit of the student-led July uprising, which ended years of misrule in Bangladesh.

Later, Yunus met Timor-Leste President Jose Ramos-Horta to discuss mutual interests.

Meanwhile, Munich Security Conference Chairman Ambassador Christoph Heusgen yesterday invited Yunus to join the key annual security conclave to be held in the German city of Munich in February this year.

Heusgen extended the invitation to Yunus when he met the chief adviser on the

Rony immediately went there to defuse the tension. They also wanted to listen to the demands of those who went there.

"However, instead of cooperating, they attacked the executive members..."

When other leaders and activists went to the central office, the situation "heated up" and the "misguided people" were "forced" to leave the office.

The statement said some of those "misguided people" participated in the mass uprising but none of them were associated with the Students Against Discrimination.

The platform has formed a probe committee. "Legal action will be taken against the people involved after the probe," it added.

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পাওয়ার শিল্প রাজ্যাদৰ্শ পিএলজি

POWER GRID BANGLADESH PLC

(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

www.powergrid.gov.bd

Ref No.: 27.21.0000.414.07.057.25.1593

Date: January 21, 2025

Request for Expression of Interest (REoI)

Consultancy Service for "Modernization with Capacity Enhancement of 230/132kV AIS Substation to GIS Substation at Ghorashal Power Station Complex" Project

1. The Power Grid Bangladesh PLC (Power Grid) intends to undertake a project titled as the "Modernization with Capacity Enhancement of 230/132kV AIS Substation to GIS Substation at Ghorashal Power Station Complex". The assigned Consultant will be responsible for developing various essential project deliverables in compliance with ADB's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) and Environmental and Social Policy (ESP) under this contract. These deliverables include the preparation of the Feasibility Study Report, Topographic Survey, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Climate Change Assessment, Financial and Economic analysis, and other relevant instruments for the initial subprojects that have been identified as per ToR.
2. The consulting firm will be selected under the Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS 80:20) procedures.
3. PGCB invites eligible consulting firms to express their interests in providing the above-mentioned consulting service. This invitation with the draft ToR is available at www.pgcb.gov.bd. Interested consultants may obtain additional information from the office at the address below during office hours i.e. 0900 to 1600 hours, Sunday to Thursday.
4. Consultants may associate to enhance their qualifications, but should mention whether the association is in the form of a "joint venture" or "sub-consultancy". In the case of an association, all members of such "association" should have real and well-defined inputs to the assignment and it is preferable to limit the total number of firms including their associates to a maximum of three.
5. Interested consultants must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochures, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, availability of appropriate skills among staff, etc). Documentary evidence like completion certificate with scope or contract agreement including scope etc. must be provided for the projects submitted by the firm as their competency in EoI. The EoIs would be reviewed based on the following:

- a) Registration of firm/Trade License, JV Agreement (if applicable), TIN Certificate, Updated Tax Return Certificate, VAT Registration.
- b) Background with brochures showing their experience, facilities, and areas of expertise,
- c) Experience of Feasibility Study, Topographic Survey and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) assignments,
- d) Availability of appropriate professional qualifications and experiences among staff and resources to carry out the assignment,
- e) History of litigation,
- f) Adequate solvency certificate.
- g) Other documents as mentioned in the EoI.

6. Expression of Interest (EoI) shall be submitted in one original and one copy in a sealed envelope to the office of the Chief Engineer (Project Monitoring), 11th Floor, Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh by **February 05, 2025 at 1600 hours** Bangladesh Standard Time (BST) and be marked with: "Expression of Interest for Consultancy Service for Modernization with Capacity Enhancement of 230/132kV AIS Substation to GIS Substation at Ghorashal Power Station Complex Project".
7. Any application submitted later than the specified date and time or submitted through telex/fax/email will not be entertained.

Dr. Md. Farid Ahmed
Chief Engineer (Project Monitoring), A/C

Office of the Project Director

Reviving the Technology of Muslin Yarn & Muslin Fabric 'the Golden Heritage of Bangladesh' (2nd Phase) Project

Bangladesh Handloom Board

BTMC Bhaban (3rd Floor), 7-9, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215

www.bhb.gov.bd

Invitation for Tenders (OTM)

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Textiles & Jute
2	Agency	Bangladesh Handloom Board
3	Procuring entity name	Project Director
4	Procuring entity district	Dhaka
5	Invitation for	Selection of agency for the procurement of Hiring Vehicle on Outsourcing basis. (Non -Consultancy Service)
6	Invitation Ref. No.	24.05.0000.548.14.001.24-02, Date: 20.01.2025
7	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM), NCT
8	Budget & source of funds	Development Budget, GoB
9	Project name	Reviving the Technology of Muslin Yarn & Muslin Fabrics 'the Golden Heritage of Bangladesh' (2nd Phase) Project.
10	Tender Package No.	Service-01
11	Tender publication date	21.01.2025
12	Tender last selling date	03.02.2025 at 04.00pm
13	Tender closing date & time	04.02.2025 at 12.00pm
14	Tender opening date & time	04.02.2025 at 1.00pm
15	Project Director Office, Reviving the Technology of Muslin Yarn & Muslin Fabrics 'the Golden Heritage of Bangladesh' (2nd Phase) Project, BTMC Bhaban (3rd Floor), 7-9, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215.	
16	Eligibility of tenderer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Any Hiring Vehicle agency having up-to-date trade license, income tax submission certificate & VAT registration certificate with e-BIN. ii) The minimum number of years of general experience of the Tenderer in contracting industries in public sector as Prime Contractor/Sub Contractor/Management Contractor shall be 5 (Five) years. iii) The minimum specific experience as a Prime Contractor in providing non-Consultant Service of at least two (2) contract of similar nature (Hiring Vehicle), complexity and methods/ technology completed over a period of three (3) years each with a value of at least of Tk. 9,00,000.00 (Nine lac) shall be required. iv) The required average annual turnover of the Tenderer shall be at least of the amount of Tk. 9,00,000.00 (Nine lac) over the last 03 (three) years. v) The minimum amount of liquid assets i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the Tenderer shall be Tk. 7,00,000.00 (Seven lac). vi) Other qualifications as mentioned in the Tender documents.
17	Brief description of services	Hiring (one) Microbus on outsourcing basis.
18	Price of tender document	Tk. 1,000.00 (one thousand) only.
19	Pkg. No.	Identification of package
20	Service-01	Location
21	Service-01	Tender security
22	Contact details of official inviting tender	Completion time
		12 months
		Phone: 02-55012769

Celebrity book releases to watch for this EKUSHEY BOI MELA



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

With only a few days left before the month-long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela (Amar Ekushey Book Fair) kicks off, many stars are preparing to release their new books.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

As is tradition, the fair will see a range of exciting new titles from some of Bangladesh's beloved celebrities.

Here is a look at which stars are releasing their latest works this year:

Renowned singer Sajia Sultana Putul has been an author for 10 years and has published several novels. This year, she's bringing a new novel, titled *Shilpissattar Byabachhed*, set to be released by the esteemed publishing house Anannya Prokashoni.

Speaking about her passion for writing, Putul said, "Writing is something I love, and it's also a hobby. For the past decade, I've been working on books, and I've written a new novel for this year's book fair. I'm looking forward to holding it in my hands.

Like before, I hope readers will love it."

Ekushey Padak-winning actor Abul Hayat has also been a seasoned writer for many years, with numerous books already published. His collection includes short stories, novels, and more. This year, his autobiography *Robi Poth* will be available from the first day of the Ekushey Book Fair.

"*Robi Poth* is my autobiography. I've tried to reflect on the many incidents of my life. How many events can one even remember over a lifetime? Yet, I've made an effort to share as many stories as I could in this book. I hope everyone will enjoy it," said Abul Hayat.

Ekushey Padak-winning actor and cultural activist Mamunur Rashid, who has been awarded the Bangla Academy Award for his writing, has been on the literary scene for more than 50 years. This year, he is releasing

another fan-favourite actor, who also became a household name for his witty performances in Humayun Ahmed's television dramas, Faruque Ahmed, has been consistently publishing books over the past few years, and this year will be no different. He's releasing two new books at the fair, namely, *Amar Na Bola Kotha*, an autobiography published by Kingbodhonty Publication, and *Hau Mau Kha*, a collection of plays published by Mizan Publishers.

"It feels as though time does fly since the book fair is upon us once again. I used to attend the fair as a reader, and now I go there as an author. Readers buy my books, ask for autographs, take pictures with me and it all feels amazing. I'm sure this year will be no different," said Faruque Ahmed.

Celebrated actress Shanarei Devi Shantu, who has been consistently writing for several years, will also be releasing a new book this year. Her novel *Bagh Manush*, published by Aajob Prokash, will be available from the first day of the fair.

Speaking about her latest release, Shantu said, "*Bagh Manush* is a unique story. I'm confident readers will love it."

a new book titled *Ghotona Shotyo Shotyo Noy* as a collection of columns. Eminent illustrator Dhruba Esh designed the covering of the book which is set to be published by Shobdoshilpo.

"I've been writing columns for newspapers for many years, focusing on contemporary issues. These columns resonate with readers. My book is a collection of many of those columns. Readers who enjoyed them in the newspapers will now be able to read them in the form of a book," said Mamunur Rashid.

Popular actor Dr Ejajul Islam made headlines last year as a writer when he published a book about Humayun Ahmed. This year, he's back with not one, but two books, both of which are centred around the legendary author-director. Published by Somoy Prokashon, the two books are titled *Humayun Sir-er Chokhe Jol* and *Humayun Sir-er Shooting*.

Another fan-favourite actor, who also became a household name for his witty performances in Humayun Ahmed's television dramas, Faruque Ahmed, has been consistently publishing books over the past few years, and this year will be no different. He's releasing two new books at the fair, namely, *Amar Na Bola Kotha*, an autobiography published by Kingbodhonty Publication, and *Hau Mau Kha*, a collection of plays published by Mizan Publishers.

"It feels as though time does fly since the book fair is upon us once again. I used to attend the fair as a reader, and now I go there as an author. Readers buy my books, ask for autographs, take pictures with me and it all feels amazing. I'm sure this year will be no different," said Faruque Ahmed.

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Imran's 'Mon Bujhli Na' set for Valentine's Day release



Singer Imran Mahmudul is all set to release his latest track *Mon Bujhli Na* this Valentine's Day. The song has been composed by Fuad Almuqtadir, with lyrics penned by Abdur Rahman.

Fuad collaborated with Sanjoy on the composition. Saikat Reza reportedly directed the music video, which features Suman Suman as the model. The track will be released on Imran's official YouTube channel.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Imran shared, "*Mon Bujhli Na* is a song that holds a special place in my heart. After a long time, I had the chance to collaborate with Fuad *bhai*. This is our second project together after *Dhoa*, which was a popular hit among listeners."

Film Artistes' Association suspends Nipun's membership

Nipun Akter's membership in the Bangladesh Film Artistes' Association has been suspended, however, it has not been completely revoked.

Yesterday, the organisational secretary of the Artistes' Association, actor Joy Chowdhury, confirmed this information to The Daily Star.

On January 19, the executive council of the Film Artistes' Association unanimously decided to suspend actress Nipun's membership after an official meeting.

Joy Chowdhury stated, "Nipun's membership has been suspended. If she can prove the allegations against her are false, her membership will be reinstated."

On July 16, 2024, Nipun Akter reportedly released a statement on the Artistes' Association's letterhead, identifying herself as the former general secretary. She later shared the address on her Facebook page on July 17.

The actress was also accused of making demeaning comments in the media about the committee's current general secretary, Monowar Hossain Dipjol.

As a result, Nipun's membership in the Artistes' Association has been suspended.

NEWS

Mexican president urges 'cool heads' in face of Trump threats

AFP, Mexico City

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum yesterday called for "cool heads" to prevail in the face of US President Donald Trump's announcement of severe new restrictions on migration, among other policy changes.

"It's important to always keep a cool head and refer to signed agreements, beyond actual speeches," Sheinbaum told

her regular morning conference, a day after Trump announced he was sending troops to the border with Mexico to halt illegal migration and again threatened major tariffs on Mexican imports.

On his first day back in office Trump declared a national emergency at the southern border "to repel the disastrous invasion of our country."

His administration said it would also reinstate a "Remain in Mexico" policy

that prevailed under Trump's first presidency, under which people who apply to enter the United States from Mexico must remain there until their application has been decided.

The White House also halted an asylum program for people fleeing authoritarian regimes in Central and South America, leaving thousands of people stranded on the Mexican side of the border.

who are clearly visible in the footage, remain free.

"Indigenous students were supposed to meet some advisers today to place our demands. But we have not got an appointment with them. If our demands are not met, we will go for tough programmes."

Alik Mree went on to say that it was the police inaction that enabled the men to launch the assault in the first place.

Contacted, Mesbah Uddin, the officer-in-charge of Motijheel Police Station, said the police were trying to apprehend the remaining suspects.

The BNP leader added that no visible efforts have been made to improve the standard of education or resolve the problems in the sector.

He also opposed the lottery system for admissions to educational institutions and said that it should be abolished soon for establishing a merit-based education system.

2 men stabbed

FROM PAGE 12

Speaking to the newspaper, Rimon's aunt, Mutka Akter said, "Rimon was my sister's son. He had been living with me since childhood after his mother passed away. His grandmother owned a two-storey building in Mugda. After her death, Rimon and my brother Rajib began fighting over the property. As part of that dispute, Rajib stabbed Rimon around 1:00pm [yesterday]."

Trump has made clear he would support Israel, and in one of his first acts as president, he revoked sanctions on Israeli settlers in the

West Bank imposed by the Biden administration over attacks against Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas both congratulated Trump on his return.

Displaced Gazan Ghadeer Abdul Rabbo, 30, told AFP she hopes that "with or without Trump", the ceasefire will hold and world governments will help "maintain this calm, because we are afraid".

In Rafah, in southern Gaza, Ismail Madi said that "we have endured immense hardships, but we will stay here. We will rebuild this place."

There was anxiety in Israel over the next phases of the truce, with

Govt plans to withdraw all false cases

FROM PAGE 12
politically motivated cases by February."

The fabricated cases are being identified using specific criteria.

Only cases with a reasonable amount of suspicion of being fabricated are being prioritised for withdrawal. Cases with valid grounds for doubt will not be considered under the initiative, Nazrul said.

The cases were not immediately withdrawn after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government on August 5 last year as 4,000 to 4,500 public prosecutors appointed by the past regime fled from their workplaces following the mass uprising.

"Without public prosecutors, we cannot withdraw the cases as the government or the law ministry has to work through public prosecutors. Immediately after the appointment of public prosecutors, we started to work to identify and make a list of ghost cases."

The government also hopes to withdraw cases involving speech offences under the Cyber Security Act (CSA) filed due to the expression of opinions within two weeks, Nazrul said.

There are currently 322 such cases under trial, all filed during the previous government's tenure.

The law ministry has the capacity to intervene and withdraw the cases, Nazrul said, adding that the public prosecutor's office has dismissed 113

of the 322 cases.

"All related cases will be withdrawn within two weeks."

He also addressed concerns regarding the CSA stating that the ministry of information and communication technology is actively working on the withdrawal or amendment of the law.

"Whenever they seek our advice, we provide it. Various suggestions have been raised regarding the CSA. Some support amendments, others oppose them."

The ICT ministry is considering more in-depth discussions on the issue.

"We decided we could not sit idle. We have begun the process of withdrawing cases filed under the CSA. Through ongoing discussions, the ICT ministry will determine whether to amend or repeal the law."

As of August last year, at least 5,818 cases filed under the CSA and its predecessors – the ICT Act and the Digital Security Act – were pending across the country's eight cyber tribunals, according to a press release issued by the law ministry on September 30 last year.

Since the fall of the AI government, demands to repeal or amend controversial laws, particularly those curbing freedom of expression, have intensified.

On November 4 last year, Nahid Islam, adviser to the information

ministry, announced that the CSA would be repealed within a week and pending cases under the act would be dismissed.

However, as the act was not repealed and cases were not dropped, rights activists, journalists and victims of the cases have demanded the government dismiss the pending cases.

Earlier on December 28 last year, Nazrul at a dialogue said his ministry had received estimates of ghost cases from 51 districts and is awaiting data from the remaining 13.

"We have asked all public prosecutors from all districts to investigate and estimate the number of such cases filed for political reasons," he said then.

Nazrul also talked about Hasina's extradition from India during yesterday's press conference.

"We have written a letter for her extradition. If India does not extradite Sheikh Hasina, it will be a clear violation of the extradition treaty between Bangladesh and India. Regarding what steps we will take in the international community, that will be decided through the ministry of foreign affairs."

In this regard, a red alert has been issued through the Interpol.

"We are doing everything we can. If there is anything else to be done, we will think about it and proceed accordingly."

Most attackers at large

FROM PAGE 12

members of "Students for Sovereignty".

A case was later filed against 16 named and 200-300 unidentified attackers.

Indigenous student bodies and several other organisations have demanded that the photo of the graffiti be brought back to school books.

The attack, broadcast live by various media outlets and Facebook pages, sparked widespread condemnation.

After police arrested two suspects, Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul wrote on Facebook that there will be a trial. "Two individuals have already been arrested

in connection with the incident."

Advisee Mahfuj Alam also wrote on Facebook, "The others involved in the incident will also be arrested. The entire incident will be investigated. No act of terrorism and extortion will be allowed on the streets."

Alik Mree, an organiser of the "aggrieved indigenous students, masses", said, "It is frustrating how some of the assailants are making Facebook posts and speaking on Facebook Live, but the law enforcers apparently cannot find them. The two arrests were nothing more than a show... The other perpetrators,

who are clearly visible in the footage, remain free."

"Indigenous students were supposed to meet some advisers today to place our demands. But we have not got an appointment with them. If our demands are not met, we will go for tough programmes."

Alik Mree went on to say that it was the police inaction that enabled the men to launch the assault in the first place.

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There was anxiety in Israel over the next phases of the truce, with

columnist Sima Kadmon warning in the Yedioth Ahronoth daily that the coming hostage releases may be more painful than the first.

In southern Gaza, Ammar Barakbakh, 35, spent the truce's first night in a tent on the rubble of his home. "This is the first time I sleep comfortably and I'm not afraid," he said. "It's a beautiful feeling, and I hope the ceasefire continues."

Trump's return raises cautious optimism

Govt, businesses should take proactive measures in light of the new reality

Donald J. Trump's second term as US president is expected to bring significant changes to the world's political and economic order, as reflected in his inaugural speech and the executive orders he signed on Monday. We look ahead to the next four years with cautious optimism, given the unpredictability of his actions during his first term in office (2017-2021).

Trump's re-election to the top seat of a superpower and the continued rise of the ultra-right in the US sends a strong message. It signals a shift in America's view of the world and its international commitment to uphold human rights and promote peace and stability. As before, Trump's America-first policies may significantly impact international affairs where belligerent competitiveness may outweigh reason and compromise. On the other hand, there is hope that Trump, who took credit for brokering the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas, may influence an end to the Russia-Ukraine war as well—two biggest international crises in recent years. We, however, hope that his recent scepticism about this ceasefire will not result in another unfair deal for Palestinians, who have already suffered decades of repression by Israel with the support of the US's one-sided policy.

Sadly, America's own track record of human rights violations does not inspire confidence. Trump's pardoning of 1,500 rioters involved in the 2021 Capitol Hill attack signals the supremacy of personal loyalty over the rule of law. What does this act say about the US stance on justice and fairness—values it prescribes to other countries? Moreover, Trump's pledge to launch a "tariff war," his idea of a universal tariff on all foreign goods, and his withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organization are quite concerning, especially for countries like Bangladesh. However, the recent meeting between the new Chargé d'Affaires of the US Embassy and Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has left room for hope as the former renewed the pledge to support the interim government on issues including development.

In the meantime, the business community and the government should take proactive measures such as exploring and diversifying markets and products, engaging in diplomatic initiatives, and strengthening regional and bilateral ties with other nations. The government should also engage with the Bangladeshi expatriate community in the US to build a stronger relationship with the Trump administration.

Finally, the prominent presence of tech giants at Trump's inaugural ceremony should be taken seriously. The re-emergence of an ultra-nationalist leader could have serious consequences for the world, particularly in a nuclear and tech-driven era. This is especially alarming for smaller nations like ours. We can only hope that the superpowers will see the bigger picture and that good sense will prevail in building a cooperative world.

New uniform won't fix a broken force

Police must focus on substantive changes instead

The decision to change the uniforms of Bangladesh Police, along with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and Ansar, reflects an attempt to distance these forces from the stigma attached to their current attire. After years of being used as political instruments by the Awami League government—most notably during the bloody July uprising—these uniforms have become symbols of fear, oppression, and corruption. A new dress represents a break from that past and also a fresh start. However, it does nothing to address the real issue at hand: the need for institutional reforms. It is no surprise then that the decision has left citizens unimpressed.

While uniform changes have historical precedents in this country, the timing of the move—amid a persistent economic crisis and ongoing discussions about police reform—raises questions. First, outfitting approximately 2.14 lakh police, 5,000 Rab, and around 51,000 Ansar and 17,000 Battalion Ansar personnel will come at a significant financial cost. These funds can be better spent on modernising their training, improving their investigative capacity, and equipping them to better serve citizens. Second, giving Rab a new uniform while its very necessity is under review seems like a pre-emptive move. Third, can a simple change of colours erase the deep-seated public distrust associated with these uniforms?

What our law enforcement agencies need is a shift in culture, not just in clothing. While announcing the decision, Home Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury himself acknowledged that "the change in uniforms symbolises the need for a shift in law enforcers' mindset and behaviour." One of the first demands raised by police personnel after the August 5 changeover was to abandon their old uniforms—perhaps to shed the stigma attached to them. However, restoring public trust will require much more than a makeover; it will require concrete proof of transformation through everyday action. Just recently, we saw how police used water cannons, sound grenades, and batons to disperse a protest against attacks on Indigenous rights activists. Such heavy-handed tactics echo the pre-uprising era when excessive force was routinely used against demonstrators.

Evidently, a mindset shift will not come through a uniform change. What the police need is a fundamental transformation in their operations, accountability mechanisms, and interactions with the public. The Police Reform Commission has already proposed a range of measures to the government. While these proposals await decisions based on stakeholder feedback, law enforcement agencies can, at the very least, adhere to established rules and regulations without succumbing to undue pressure. That is where their focus should be.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Roe v. Wade ruling

On this day in 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court issued one of its most momentous decisions, ruling in *Roe v. Wade* that a Texas statute criminalising abortion in most instances violated a woman's constitutional right of privacy.

Impact of rising debt on our socio-economic future



Selim Jahan
is director of the Human Development Report Office and lead author of the Human Development Report.

SELIM JAHAN

At the end of June 2024, the total debt burden—both domestic and external—of Bangladesh was Tk 18,000 billion. Since the population of Bangladesh is about 180 million, this implies that the debt burden on each Bangladeshi citizen is Tk 100,000. No, this is not our personal debt, but it represents our liability as citizens of Bangladesh. If we cannot repay this debt, it will become a liability for future generations. Looking at it from a different perspective, every child born in Bangladesh today is born with a debt.

Truly speaking, the amount of Tk 18,000 billion is enormous. However, the current situation was not created in a day or two. About four years ago, the country's debt burden was around Tk 11,000 billion, roughly equal to the national budgets over the past three years. Of the total debt, domestic debt amounts to about Tk 10,000 billion, representing 56 percent of the total debt, while foreign debt was approximately Tk 8,000 billion, or 44 percent of the total debt. Three observations are pertinent. First, this is the first time that domestic debt has exceeded Tk 10,000 billion. Second, over the last four years, the amount of foreign debt has doubled. Third, the current debt-to-GDP ratio in Bangladesh is about 36 percent, compared to 32 percent four years ago.

These trends call for some comments. First, the debt-to-GDP situation undoubtedly needs consistent monitoring. It is true that Bangladesh's debt-to-GDP ratio has not reached a dangerous level. According to the yardstick set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the acceptable level of the debt-to-GDP ratio is 55 percent. With a ratio of 36 percent, Bangladesh is in the safe zone.

Second, every year, the government has to borrow from domestic and foreign

sources to meet budget deficits. Since domestic loans are easier to obtain, previous governments have often opted for this route. In fact, due to inefficiencies in loan management, the majority of loans in the past were taken from domestic sources.

Third, most foreign loans were taken without proper scrutiny, necessary negotiations, or objective evaluations.



FILE VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

Significant amounts of foreign loans were used to finance prestige projects. This occurred during a time when international organisations reduced the grace period for loan repayments and increased interest rates. The grace period for repaying loans for prestige projects is now ending, increasing the pressure to meet loan repayment liabilities.

Fourth, one aspect of debt is debt servicing. During the 2023-24 financial year, the Bangladeshi government spent Tk 1,000 billion on debt repayment, amounting to one-sixth of the national budget. In the previous

financial year, the debt servicing ratio was 17 percent. Foreign loans have another dimension: interest on foreign loans must be paid in foreign currencies, leading to a depletion of foreign exchange reserves. For instance, as debt servicing on foreign loans has increased, Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves have fallen below \$20 billion.

Fifth, the increasing debt burden of Bangladesh will have adverse impacts on the socio-economic sectors of the country. In the 2023-24 financial year, debt servicing amounted to about Tk 1,000 billion, surpassing the country's education budget. If more funds are allocated for debt servicing, fewer resources will be available for crucial areas like health, education, and nutrition. This would negatively affect human development in Bangladesh.

domestic and foreign loans must be objectively assessed. Loan objectives, project evaluations, loan negotiations, and efficient management should guide decisions on loan sources.

Fourth, the government must mobilise resources for debt repayment and servicing. Currently, the government relies heavily on indirect taxes to generate revenue. This dependence must decrease, and Bangladesh's direct tax base must be expanded. The tax-to-GDP ratio in Bangladesh is only about 8 percent, compared to 12 percent in India and 17 percent in Nepal. Bangladesh's ratio is far below the 19 percent average in the Asia-Pacific region and 25 percent in developing countries.

Increasing the tax-to-GDP ratio must involve expanding the coverage and amount of direct taxes. Approximately 68 percent of the population does not pay income tax; these individuals must be brought into the tax net.

Fifth, there is another important dimension to direct taxation. Historically, revenue has been mobilised through indirect taxes and duties on poor people rather than income taxes on the rich. This has exacerbated economic disparities in society. As Bangladesh aspires to build an equitable society, it is essential to reform this tax structure, which is unfavourable to common people. For example, while nearly 60 percent of tax revenue in India comes from direct taxes, nearly 65 percent of taxes in Bangladesh come from duties on essential commodities, disproportionately affecting poorer people. Revenue can also be increased by addressing tax evasion and improving tax administration. Due to tax evasion in various sectors, the Bangladeshi government loses tax revenue ranging from Tk 560 billion to Tk 3,000 billion. Such evasion can be curbed through the use of information and communication technologies.

In conclusion, I once believed I had no economic debt—that I was a free bird. However, I now understand that, while I do not have personal debt, I bear a liability of Tk 100,000 as a citizen of Bangladesh. I realise that the country's indebtedness has increased, and I am a part of this debt too.

We must break free from our economic captivity



Bobby Hajaj
is a faculty member at North South University.

BOBBY HAJAJ

Once, long ago, the poet Nazrul sang of revolution, of freedom from oppression, but were he alive today, he might lament a nation enthralled—not to foreign invaders, but to a domestic oligarchy.

Bangladesh, a country of immense potential, now finds itself shackled by the iron grip of family-owned conglomerates. These corporate behemoths, shadowy Leviathans cloaked in cronyism, have seized the state, becoming the financial sinew of Sheikh Hasina's authoritarian regime. Their stranglehold threatens not only our economy but also our democracy, suffocating the very ideals for which this nation was born.

In Japan's pre-war years, the zaibatsu—vast industrial and financial conglomerates-dominated the economy, leveraging their might to entrench authoritarianism. A striking parallel can be drawn with the past Awami regime in Bangladesh, where conglomerates like S. Alam, Beximco and Bashundhara entrenched themselves across critical sectors, including energy, finance, real estate and media.

These conglomerates have become the faceless architects of a regime sustained by repression and corruption, extracting billions from an impoverished populace to line their pockets and bankroll autocracy. The modus operandi is insidious: monopolistic practices that stifle competition, inflate prices and hollow out public coffers.

Banks have been looted with impunity, state contracts distributed like party favours and regulatory

bodies rendered impotent. Foreign investors, sensing the rot, flee; the economy's lifeblood haemorrhages. Yet the perpetrators remain untouched, shielded by their proximity to power.

History offers a clarion call: economic monopolies and democratic governance cannot coexist.

The Allied dismantling of Japan's zaibatsu after World War II stands as a model. By decentralising economic power, breaking conglomerates into smaller entities, and instituting strict anti-trust laws, Japan laid the groundwork for a competitive, transparent economy. Similarly, South Korea's chaebol reforms curbed the dominance of family-owned conglomerates, injecting accountability into the veins of its economic system.

Bangladesh, too, must summon the courage to confront its oligarchs. Reforms must begin with an unflinching examination of financial records, exposing the labyrinthine networks of collusion between conglomerates and state actors. Here, examples abound: Brazil's Operation Car Wash dismantled an empire of corruption, revealing the pernicious ties between politicians and business magnates. The Zondo Commission in South Africa meticulously mapped out state capture by corporate elites. These efforts were not mere exercises in forensic accounting but acts of reclamation—nations reclaiming their dignity, their future.

The task before us is Herculean but not insurmountable.

First, we must establish a powerful,

independent task force, armed with the tools of forensic accounting, data analytics and legal expertise. By dissecting financial flows, tracing cross ownership structures and auditing procurement records, this body can expose the mechanisms of economic enslavement.

In South Korea, the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission worked in

Every inflated price, every siphoned dollar, every monopolised sector represents a child denied an education, a farmer deprived of fair markets, a citizen silenced by poverty. The battle is not just economic; it is existential. It is a battle for the soul of Bangladesh, a battle to reclaim our sovereignty from those who would sell it piecemeal for private gain.

tandem with whistleblowers to unveil the rot within chaebols. Bangladesh must do the same, empowering civil society to join this battle.

Temporary nationalisation offers another pathway. Inspired by Japan's post-war reforms, key conglomerates could be placed under professional management for a limited period. This is not an invitation to chaos but an orderly transition: stabilising operations, removing corrupt actors and creating the conditions for fair privatisation.

The aim is not to destroy but to transform, to extract these entities from the toxic embrace of cronyism and return them to the people as competitive, transparent enterprises. Some will cry foul, invoking the

spectre of economic disruption or accusing reformers of vendetta. Let them cry. The moral imperative is clear: the wealth of a nation cannot be the preserve of a few.

The lives of 170 million citizens—their hopes, their dreams, their right to dignity—are at stake. We must remember that these conglomerates do not merely control industries; they control futures.

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Imagine industries where competition thrives, where entrepreneurs dare to dream without fear of predation by monopolies. Imagine a government no longer beholden to the oligarchs but answerable to its people. This vision is not utopian; it is attainable. It requires political will, legal reform, and, above all, a collective awakening.

Let us remember that history is a relentless tide. The zaibatsu fell. The chaebols were humbled. Even the most entrenched powers can be dismantled when a nation decides that enough is enough.

Bangladesh stands at such a crossroads. The choice is stark: capitulation or courage, stagnation or progress.

In the end, this is not merely an economic question but a moral one. Will we, as a people, continue to watch as our nation's wealth is siphoned away, our democracy eroded, our dreams deferred? Or will we rise, as we did in 1971, and declare that this land, this future, belongs to us all? The time for equivocation is over. The time for action is now.

For Bangladesh, the stakes could not be higher. For the oligarchs, the message could not be clearer: your time is up.

The ceasefire that couldn't heal: Reflections from a survivor



Kamel Abu Amsha
is a Palestinian medical student
in Faridpur Medical College.

KAMEL ABU AMSHA

Late September 2023, I returned to Gaza from Faridpur to see my family. It was my 24th birthday. I have been studying medicine in Bangladesh, and it was the first time in four years that I visited them. A few days later, we all knew what had happened. After seven months of genocide, I left Gaza and my family behind. My story of surviving the genocide was covered by *The Daily Star* in May 2024. I am not one to share my sorrow or pain, but I agreed to let a journalist document what happened to me so that Israel could not achieve its final victory—erasing these atrocities from human memory.

During those weeks when I shared what I went through in Gaza, there was talk of a ceasefire, but it never seemed likely as things only worsened. I was in Gaza during a temporary truce, which was reported

of war with them. Then a strange feeling overtook me. Seven months of genocide flashed across my mind like a reel. I can't forget October 7, the day I had been asleep in Gaza for just seven days before the war began. I understood nothing back then and could not, in my worst nightmare, imagine all that followed: displacement after displacement,

my parents were taking refuge with other stranded residents in a small room of a broken house in southern North Gaza. I could not reach my family when the ceasefire was announced, and at the time of this writing, I still haven't been able to talk to them, as they do not have internet. But I heard there was relentless shelling. Until the ceasefire

understand how terrible it is unless they see it with their own eyes. Yet still, I feel a sense of relief that the bombing has stopped, even if temporarily, and people have stopped dying—a thought that once seemed too distant. In Gaza, "peace" now means not hearing the thunderous sound of bombs, and a pause in the constant struggle for survival.

Thinking of my family's condition has made me feel like giving up, but I returned to Bangladesh alive, with the dream of becoming a doctor. I continued studying, but it was not without challenges. After returning, I would suffer severe trauma shocks. They would start with chest pain, and I would fall unconscious, on the verge of heart attacks. My roommates, who took me to the CCU, later told me I hallucinated snipers and blood. But I am one of the lucky ones. I made it out alive after seven months. For my family members and friends who lost their children and parents, the psychological trauma is immense.

News stories now focus on Israeli hostages being reunited with their families, while Palestinians are referred to as "prisoners." The Israeli army has randomly and arbitrarily arrested people. The worst day of my life was December 18 last year,

Beit Hanoun. Their neighbours were killed. My mother was injured by shrapnel while escaping.

They arrested my brothers Nahid, 21, and Mohammad, 22, my grandfather, who is over 70, and my father. None of my brothers had any affiliation with Hamas. What crime did they commit other than trying to survive? My father was released, thankfully, but my brothers and grandfather remain in an Israeli prison, enduring torture. Everyone in Gaza knows what the prisons are like—prisoners are given no place to sleep, nothing to eat, and are beaten as though they are not human beings.

I don't know why my father was released but my brothers weren't. The way the Israelis imprison Palestinians is arbitrary and ruthless. Each time I see the news, I hope to see my brothers freed before the next tragedy strikes. I don't trust the ceasefire will last or that the war will permanently end. The perpetrators' nature is betrayal.

The Israeli army told us to go to "safe zones," only to bomb them. They tricked people, even children, into death. I fled to so many such zones only to be forced to leave again. Many escaped alive—if they were lucky—while thousands died.

Months passed, and I have lost 35 family members to date. I lost my cousin Jamal, who was like a brother to me. The day he was killed by Israeli airstrikes, my uncle, Jamal's father, tried to bury him in Jabalia. But the Israeli had sieged the area. Jamal's body was left with a cloth, and today, five months later, he has still not been buried. As I write this, I wonder what Jamal did in this cruel world, to not even get the chance to rest peacefully and with dignity, even after he was killed.

As I write this, I wonder what Jamal did in this cruel world, to not even get the chance to rest peacefully and with dignity, even after he was killed.

During the second paper of my final medical exams. I woke up to messages from my cousin Sayed that the Israeli army had besieged the shelter where my family was in

We Gazans dream that one day the sun will rise for us and never set again. Until then, we keep going, even if it means dying in the process. There may be a ceasefire now, but any form of trust that lives will be spared has ceased to exist.

When I left for Bangladesh, my father told me, "We know our fate, but you have a different fate. Go and become a doctor." Every day I wake up, I remember those words with a sinking feeling in my chest, and I go on with life. Because what else can I do? In Gaza, we are hardwired to keep going—and so, that's what we do.



PHOTO COURTESY: KAMEL ABU AMSHA

Kamel's family home, captured from a video of a drone passing through the sky, on January 19, 2025.



Kamel's nephew and father in front of the camp where they were staying in North Gaza, three weeks before the ceasefire.

PHOTO COURTESY: KAMEL ABU AMSHA

as a "halt in fighting," but it was a farce. We went to our house, already bombed once, to retrieve food for the camps. We left quickly as the house was bombed again during that pause.

Months passed, and I have lost 35

family members to date. I lost my cousin Jamal, who was like a brother to me. The day he was killed by Israeli airstrikes, my uncle, Jamal's father, tried to bury him in Jabalia. But the Israeli had sieged the area. Jamal's body was left with a cloth, and today, five months later, he has still not been buried. As I write this, I wonder what Jamal did in this cruel world, to not even get the chance to rest peacefully and with dignity, even after he was killed.

My immediate family have been displaced almost daily and injured. Changes happened around the world but things remained the same in the north of Gaza: in horror. The government changed in Bangladesh, where I've been since leaving my family in Gaza. Similar to the internet blackout during the last days of the previous regime here, my family still goes without internet for five to seven days at a stretch.

On a random Wednesday, January 15, 2025, we all got the news that a ceasefire had been reached. My first reaction was an overwhelming urge to celebrate with my family, just as I had suffered the flames

hunger, fear, thirst, and exhaustion. I can't forget the days in Gaza's hospitals—the sight of dismembered children and the cries from phosphorus burns. I can't forget escaping Gaza through an Israeli checkpoint, fearing every moment that I would be shot or bombed. I can't forget the bitter cold of the night we slept in an open tent, with torn clothes and no blankets. I hugged my brother just to keep warm. I can't forget returning to our first camp, Al-Falluja, where decaying corpses were everywhere.

The feeling of joy dissipated, and I did not believe the ceasefire would hold. Growing up in Gaza, always fearing Israeli attacks and enduring the genocide, has eroded my trust in everything. I never trusted anything the Israeli government said. They killed, destroyed, and ruined my life as I knew it. Frankly, I don't remember what my beloved city, Gaza, looked like before the war or what it felt like without the smell of death. So, how can I believe they would stop killing now?

Just days before the ceasefire,

came into effect on Sunday, I worried my family would not live to see it. The Israeli army indiscriminately bombed everywhere to claim more so-called "victories." We had been lucky, by God's grace, to survive so far. I always prayed but feared that luck would run out.

My cousin Sayed, who has periodic internet access and updates me on my family's whereabouts, informed me they evacuated their shelter but made it out safely. Now that the ceasefire is in effect, people ask if I am happy. But how could anyone from Gaza, especially those who lived through the genocide, relate to the word "happiness"? The house I grew up in has been destroyed. My family takes shelter wherever they can—in rooms of houses that survived the bombings. Many residents from the North fled to the South, and when they return, my family will be homeless. The streets of North Gaza have been destroyed with such depravity that even a tent cannot be set up.

I truly believe no one can

survive the second paper of my final medical exams.

During the second paper of my final medical exams. I woke up to messages from my cousin Sayed that the Israeli army had besieged the shelter where my family was in

Geopolitics in the age of Trump: Have we been here before?



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IMTIAZ A HUSSAIN

With Donald Trump's inauguration and return to the White House, we can rightly ask the question: is 20th century geopolitics infecting the 21st century? Was post-Cold War neoliberalism misleading, rearming the world for wars rather than liberalising its economy? Four 1920s dynamics shaking the 2020s suggest so. They are the pandemic, populism, technological breakthroughs, and internationalising democracy. Each directly fed World War II. Will they bring us an all-out war now?

The 1918-19 Spanish Flu was not a product of Spain and the Covid pandemic was not "made in China" (as President Donald J Trump then claimed). But both followed global upheavals: Spanish Flu, World War I, Covid, the 2008-11 recession and the 2014-20 "six year climate anomaly." All three examples show human-flows shaking the environment. World War I saw a human stew of soldiers from many countries crossing many boundaries, but also being locked up in war-trenches, where pandemics incubate; and both the Great Recession and climate changes moved people reluctantly. Viruses dormant in one setting often explode in another. They join such constantly threatening secular triggers as biotechnological advancements. When atmospheric conditions and advancing technologies combine, consciously or subconsciously, humans face a virus minefield. Tech-savvy people adapt. They globalise, push multiculturalism, and seek inclusiveness. Others resist. They become

nationalistic, mono-cultural minded, and exclusive in preferences.

Though it has many meanings and manifestations, populism is all about aggressive nationalism. It characterised empires a century ago, when the 1919-24 Paris Peace conferences freed many peoples. Some leaders turned extremist, and empowered White supremacy. On January 6, 2021, the world's most modern capital experienced what is generally dubbed a "third world coup." Rather than the military usurping the US Congress, Trump's fanclub ran riot. Trump lost an election, only to return stronger. He rolled out a red-carpet for his fan club, pardoning January 6 rioters, along with signing a handful of other executive orders and tossing pens from signing into the cheering crowd. Like leaders before World War II, Trump knows how to convert popular frustration into steam-rolling policymaking: pin a grievous national problem upon a domestic or foreign group. One consequence of this is to realign geopolitics. Trump detests foreigners and immigrants but geopolitics is dicier today. With Xi Jinping currently bailing Vladimir Putin, whom Trump admires, out, and Trump admiring Benjamin Netanyahu, whom nobody likes, when the International Criminal Court places both villains on the "wanted" list, no one speaks a word. Jinping, Modi, and Putin flaunt BRICS Plus and the "Global South" against US policies over Ukraine and Gaza, yet Trump, of all people, is most likely to end both wars.

Trump now placates Canada, Greenland, Mexico, and Panama, meaning the infamous

US 19th century "westward ho" will now go in northern and southern directions. At the time, cowboys evicted native Indians (Indians). In the same vein, Trump's defensive Monroe Doctrine approach belies an explosive future with non-military skirmishes.

One victim of all the above dynamics is democracy. It stands more hopelessly today. Reconciling democracy and aristocracy was impossible a century ago. The 1943 Bengal famine exposed how British Prime Minister Winston Churchill deliberately diverted food to soldiers defending the British Raj against Japan than to the peasants and farmers in the very first Indian province taken by the East India Company (who also produced the original British wealth). Similarly, today countries crusading for democracy such as Canada, France, Great Britain, and the United States, also sell weapons to Israel to blast hospitals, kill mothers, and bludgeon children.

No wonder, even by charging more interest, China's Belt Road Initiative remains popular by not imposing preconditions. Noble as it was, the concept of democracy, the modern world's 20th century nirvana, has been driven to its twilight zone in the 21st.

One of its invisible killers is technological growth. Before the 1920s, the industrial revolutions revolved around human labour and tangible instruments. Factories and tractors kicked farmers out of village homes into metropolitan apartment homes and assembly-line work, with the Great Wall Street crash highlighting the problem in developed countries. Today we call those instruments "hardware," to distinguish our supposedly more "cultivated" intellectually groomed "software" skills. But today's "less developed countries" face double-dose hardware and software kicks. In a world still not as educated as the new technologies require them to be, "democratising" has been overtaken by "monetising," as demonstrated by the presence of Elon Musk in US politics. Then there's the inescapable artificial intelligence (AI) dominance coming our way, which leaves us in a more uncertain world.

Restlessness is now our middle name. Survival of the fittest instincts dominate. They can be controlled by formidable rules. Yet instincts grow, as in the jungle, while rules of civil society vanish. Since every class has been mobilised by democracy without portraying bottom-up interests, no rules stand a chance against the Fourth Industrial Revolution's weapons: social media; artificial intelligence; and the likes. Without the promised fruits, the cancer can only grow. Since every solution must be "homegrown," international institutions flaunting vетoes and weights globally cannot help. Paradoxically, then, today's grass becomes greener if left under national control. Building a sustainable global order, in turn, requires a long enough hiatus.



DJOKOVIC unstoppable as Alcaraz falters

Novak Djokovic beat young rival Carlos Alcaraz 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 in a gladiatorial battle worthy of a title clash to charge into the Australian Open semi-finals yesterday, as the 10-time champion remained in the hunt for a record 25th Grand Slam title. In the latest chapter of a generational rivalry that has played out on the biggest stages, including last year's Paris Olympics gold medal match-up, it was the 37-year-old Serbian who used all his experience to seal the victory in a gruelling encounter that lasted over three hours at the Rod Laver Arena. In setting up a meeting with second seeded German Alexander Zverev, Djokovic has become the first man to reach 50 singles semi-finals at Grand Slams – only two behind legendary American Chris Evert.



"I just wish that this match today was the final. Just one of the most epic matches I have played on this court, any court really."

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

PHOTO: REUTERS

Rahmatganj, Abahani into Fed Cup 2nd round

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani and Rahmatganj MFS moved into the second round of the Federation Cup with third consecutive victories in Group B at different venues yesterday.

Abahani handed a 3-0 defeat to Fakirerpool Young Mens Club at Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla while Rahmatganj MFS won by the same margin against 10-man Chittagong Abahani at Rofique Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium in Mymensingh.

The qualification of Abahani and Rahmatganj in the second round meant three other teams -- Mohammedan SC, Young Mens Club, and Ctg Abahani -- were eliminated from the group stage and the group leader will be decided through the match between Abahani and Rahmatganj on February 4.

Before yesterday's games, both Abahani and Rahmatganj needed just one point to qualify to the second round but they left the ground by keeping their winning run intact in the tournament.

Abahani struggled to break the defence of Young Mens Club in the first half but managed to bounce back strongly in the second half -- striking three goals within a span of seven minutes.

Defender Yesin Khan sent goalkeeper Arman Hossain to the wrong side from the spot to give Abahani a 65-minute lead before defender Hasan Murad doubled the margin with a low left footer in the 68th minute.

Three minutes later, Murad provided a nice pass for Mahdi Yusuf Khan, who beat the goalkeeper with a powerful shot from inside the box.

In Mymensingh, Rahmatganj went ahead with a brilliant strike from Egyptian Mostafa Mahmoud in the 32nd minute before Ghanaian Samuel Boateng doubled the lead from a rebound just before half time. Substitute Fahim Nur Toha wrapped up the victory in the 71st minute with a simple tap-in.



Prime Bank PLC's deputy managing director Mohammad Nazim A. Chowdhury, BCB director and game development committee chairman Fahim Sinha, and BCB's game development manager AEM Kawser hold aloft jerseys during a ceremony in Mirpur, marking the start of the 10th edition of the Prime Bank National School Cricket Tournament 2024-25. The tournament started on Monday will see more than 7,000 students from a total of 351 schools from 64 districts fight for the championship.

What to WATCH

T Sports

BPL

Chittagong vs

Dhaka

Live from 1:30 pm

Barishal vs Khulna

Live from 6:30 pm

Sports 18

India vs England

1st T20I

Live from 7:30 pm

Sony Sports 1,

2, 5

Australian Open

Quarterfinals

Live from 9:30 am

Champions League

PSG vs Man City

Live from 2:00 am

(Thursday)

Arsenal vs Dinamo

Zagreb

Live from 2:00 am

(Thursday)

Salzburg

Live from 2:00 am

(Thursday)

Arsenal vs

Dinamo

Zagreb

Live from 2:00 am

(Thursday)

BPL payment issues: 'Tomorrow never comes'

Sri Lankan all-rounder Lahiru Samarakoon has been warming Durbar Rajshahi's bench since the franchise's first game in the Bangladesh Premier League against Fortune Barishal where he conceded 64 runs in four overs on December 30. The 27-year-old made headlines recently after he complained to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) regarding non-payment of the franchise. The Sri Lankan on Tuesday spoke to **The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan** over phone, sharing his experience regarding with the franchise and some other issues as well. Here are the excerpts from the interview:

The Daily Star (DS): It has been reported in media that you have officially informed the BCB regarding the non-payment issue of your franchise. How much truth is behind the news?



Lahiru Samarakoon (LS): Yes, the franchise hasn't paid me a single penny so far. I asked them about my money every day, but they are saying that they will give me the money tomorrow after the game or tonight. But the tomorrow never comes.

DS: You played here in the BPL last season for Durdanto Dhaka. Did the same thing happen at that time?

LS: Last year, before my departure, the franchise gave me the full contract money along with the other payments like DAs [daily allowances].

DS: Your current franchise has been claiming that they have cleared 25 percent payment of all players.

LS: I haven't got anything yet. I only received DAs from December 28 to January 15. My DAs are also due over the last seven days.

Durbar Rajshahi's no-reply

The Daily Star reached out to Durbar Rajshahi's team manager Mehrab Hossain Opee to hear the team's observation regarding the complaint made by Samarakoon on non-payment. Mehrab, while not denying the accusation, said that he was in a serious meeting at the time and the reporter to call him after a while. Mehrab, however, did not pick up the phone when later called several times.

DS: What did you write to the BCB?

LS: I said that I have no money now. The other players got the money but it's only me who hasn't got any money. Actually my manager contacted the BCB.

DS: Whom have you spoken to in your franchise?

LS: I talked to both manager [Mehrab Hossain Opee] and owner [Shafiq Rahman]. They are now saying that before the game on January 23, they will give 50 percent of payment to all players.

DS: Did you or any of your team members receive any cheques yet?

LS: No, we haven't received any.

DS: Aren't you going to the field on match days or practice days?

LS: I went to the ground only yesterday [Monday]. Before that on January 19, I told the manager that if I didn't get payment, I wouldn't go ground.

DS: So as you said, you are now spending most of your time at the team hotel. What are the activities you are engaging yourself with?

LS: In Chattogram, there are a lot of Sri Lankans. I'm enjoying my time with them. They came here to meet me.



Bangladesh Football Federation's vice-president Fahad Karim and actress Ashna Habib Bhabna, along with other dignitaries, pose for a photograph with the participants of the BFF Amputee Football Festival, which was held at the BFF turf yesterday as part of Youth Festival 2025. In the final, Shaheed Mugdha Ekadosh beat Shaheed Shahayet Ekadosh in tiebreaker to win the title.

PHOTO: BFF

City ready for PSG 'final'

Real hope Mbappe form continues

Fortunately for City, they were able to warm up for the blockbuster clash by recording their biggest Premier League win since thrashing Nottingham Forest by the same scoreline in 2022.

"We have two finals left, by winning two we qualify, winning one there's a big possibility," Guardiola said ahead of the PSG clash.

PSG are in even worse shape, one point behind City in 25th place.

With the top 24 clubs going through to the knockout stages -- the first eight automatically reach the last 16 and the sides from ninth to 24th face a play-off -- the stakes could not be higher when City travel to Paris on Wednesday.

"We have to get the points because we created problems ourselves, especially with Feyenoord, even the game we lost in Lisbon."

Like Manchester City and PSG, Real Madrid face a tough equation. It would be unthinkable for the holders and record 15-time

European champions to suffer an early knock-out, but after a poor start they are presently 20th in the 36-team group.

One thing that would boost Real's confidence is that their star French forward Kylian Mbappe has finally come to the party. After a troubled start to life at Madrid, Mbappe finally seems at home and ready to wreak havoc both in Spain and in Europe.

Mbappe's rediscovered elan comes at the perfect time for Real Madrid with two crucial Champions League matches ahead, starting with RB Salzburg's visit to the Santiago Bernabeu on Wednesday.

Madrid then face Brest on the road next week, aiming to secure progress to the next phase of the competition.

Mbappe produced arguably his finest display for Madrid as he netted a brace against Las Palmas on Sunday to help take Real top of LaLiga.

"I have adapted to the team and I can play how I want, with my teammates, with personality," he said after the game.

Vinicius Junior was suspended for their LaLiga game against Las Palmas but will return in the Champions League, and he and Mbappe must continue developing their partnership.

If Madrid's dynamic duo can find the same wavelength they will be ready to defend their status as the kings of Europe.



THE NATION'S
LARGEST ROD
MANUFACTURER
★★★★★

BSRM
building a safer nation

SHAH
CEMENT

Best Brand Award
Winner Every Year

ATTACK ON ADIVASIS Most attackers at large despite video proof

RAFIUL ISLAM

Despite clear footage from last week showing a large group of people hitting indigenous students with cricket stumps, inflicting serious injuries, law enforcers have so far arrested only two men.

Hours after the incident on January 15, two advisers to the interim government wrote on Facebook that the attackers would be arrested.

The next day, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing, in a statement, said that the government had ordered an investigation into the attack.

"The other perpetrators are being identified and will soon be arrested. All miscreants will be brought to justice," the statement read.

Many have criticised the inaction, saying that they would continue to demonstrate unless the attackers are promptly arrested.

A group of students, primarily from the indigenous communities of the hill tracts, were protesting the removal of graffiti that depicted Bangladesh's racial and religious diversity from textbooks when they were assaulted in Motijheel.

The photo of the graffiti mentioned the indigenous people as Adivasis.

At least 20 people, including women, were seriously injured by the attackers who introduced themselves as

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Jamaat, IAB vow to work together Their ameers meet at Charmonai

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a major political development, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Andolok Bangladesh (IAB) yesterday said they would work together in the interests of the country, Islam, and humanity.

Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman and IAB Ameer Syed Md Rezaul Karim, also the Charmonai Pir, made the announcement while speaking to reporters at the Charmonai Darbar Sharif at Barishal.

The Jamaat chief went to the Charmonai Darbar Sharif in Barishal Sadar upazila to meet Rezaul around noon yesterday.

The meeting between the two leaders is being considered significant in the context of the country's evolving political landscape following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina on August 5.

Jamaat has long sought to forge greater unity among Islamist parties and the efforts gained momentum after Hasina was deposed. It has already held meetings with different Islamist parties.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, IAB Ameer Rezaul said people's expectations remain unfulfilled even 54 years after independence. Those who governed the country all these years failed to meet the people's aspirations.

Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur said, "We love each other solely for the sake of Allah, and He accepts this bond of love."

He said the nation has not had the dignity it deserves over the last 54 years due to corruption and misgovernance.

Shafiqur said, "The people aspire to see the rule of Islam in Bangladesh, where followers of all religions can enjoy full rights and security."

About the collaboration between Jamaat and IAB, the

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2



EXPLOSIVES CASE 178 ex-BDR personnel get bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 178 ex-BDR personnel have been given bail in a case filed under the Explosive Substances Act in connection with the BDR massacre of 2009.

Judge Md Ibrahim Mia of the Dhaka Metropolitan Special Tribunal-2 on Sunday granted them bail after holding a hearing on their bail petitions at a makeshift court inside the Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj. Shahadat Hossain, bench assistant of the court, told The Daily Star.

"The court accepted their bail pleas as they have been acquitted by higher courts in the BDR carnage case and have no pending appeals against those acquittals," he said.

"There is no legal bar to their release unless there is an arrest warrant in any other case," added the court staffer.

Earlier, some 400



Palestinians run towards aid trucks after crossing into the Gaza Strip, following a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

Election should be held after minimal reforms

Fakhrul says BNP is not demanding polls right now

UNB, Dhaka



Amid criticisms of the party's demand for early election, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said they are demanding the polls be held after minimal reforms, not right now.

"We're not saying the election must be held right now. But if polls are conducted after implementing minimal reforms, many problems will be resolved," he said while speaking at a discussion yesterday.

The Zia Smriti Pathagar organised the programme at the Jatiya Press Club, marking the 89th birth anniversary of BNP founder and former president Ziaur Rahman and the 12th founding anniversary of Pathagar.

Fakhrul said many people, especially students, misunderstand him as to why he talks so much about the election.

"I say this because I believe, though I don't know if my belief is right or wrong, that any elected government is much better than an unelected one."

The BNP leader said people have access to an elected government, which is currently lacking.

Besides, he said, if the election is held, many of the problems the country is facing now will disappear, as the elected government will

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

'That's not our war'

Trump 'not confident' Gaza ceasefire will hold, believes Hamas has been 'weakened'

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israel-Hamas ceasefire entered a third day yesterday, while US President Donald Trump said he doubted the fragile deal would hold.

Desperately needed humanitarian aid has begun to flow into Gaza after Israel and Hamas conducted the first exchange of hostages for prisoners agreed under the terms of the ceasefire.

The Palestinian group said yesterday it will release four women hostages in the next swap with Israel under the terms of the truce.

Meanwhile, the head of Israel's military, Major General Herzi Halevi, has resigned over his responsibility for its "failure" during the Hamas's attack on October 7, 2023. Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government to resign after the military chief quit.

The Israeli military said yesterday it had launched an operation in the occupied West Bank's Jenin that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said aimed to "eradicate terrorism" in the area.

The Palestinian health ministry, based in Ramallah, said the operation had killed eight people.

In the Gaza Strip, civilians displaced by more than 15 months of offensive have been walking through an apocalyptic landscape to return to whatever remains of their homes, while rescuers trawl the rubble for bodies.

► 8 killed as Israel launches operation in West Bank

► Hamas will free four women hostages in next swap

► Israeli military chief resigns over Oct 7 'failure'

NAGORIK COMMITTEE It wants polls for a constituent assembly

Prof Salimullah says new political parties are necessary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Nagorik Committee Convenor Nasiruddin Patwari yesterday called for a constituent assembly election so that a new constitution can be drafted.

"When we speak of future elections, we mean the election to constituent assembly [Gono Parishad], which can present the people an effective constitution," he said.

His remarks came at a time when the BNP and its allies have been repeatedly demanding the national polls at the earliest.

Nasiruddin's comments came during a Q&A session with members of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee's thana representatives. The Dhaka North unit of Jatiya Nagorik Committee organised the event at the Celebrity Convention Hall in Gulshan.

He alleged that political parties were putting pressure on the government and trying to portray it as a failed one.

"We demanded the resignation of the president, but political parties opposed it. We also called for the prosecution of those who participated in the last three elections, laundered money, and killed our brothers, and a ban on the Awami

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

2 men stabbed to death in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two men were murdered in separate stabbing incidents in the capital's Bijoynagar and Mugda areas yesterday.

The police had yet to arrest any suspects in connection to these two cases as of 8:00pm last night.

In Bijoynagar, Sazu Mollah, 22, a car driver, was stabbed around 2:45am near the water tank area.

The victim, from Habbariya village in Gopalganj Sadar upazila, had been living in the Manda area of Mugda.

Paltan Police Station Officer in Charge (OC) Kazi Nasirul Amin said Sazu had been dropped off at Bijoynagar by his friend Bayezid, driver of a battery-run autorickshaw.

"Bayezid went to have tea at a nearby stall when he heard Sazu calling for help. Unable to locate him, Bayezid alerted the police, who found Sazu lying in a pool of blood in a nearby alley with multiple stab wounds," the OC said, quoting Bayezid.

Sazu was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where doctors declared him dead.

While Bayezid claimed that muggers attacked Sazu to steal his mobile phone and wallet, OC Nasirul suspected it to be a planned murder.

"We are investigating the incident," he added.

Sazu's uncle, Aslam Khan, also alleged murder.

"My nephew was called out of his home after midnight and killed. We have identified a suspect after analysing CCTV footage of the incident," he said.

Meanwhile, in Mugda, vegetable vendor Rimon Hossain, 27, was allegedly killed by his uncle over a family dispute.

Mugda Police Station OC Saizidur Rahman said, "Rimon died undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 5:00pm. We're investigating the murder."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2