

Uprising party set for launch on Friday



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Students Against Discrimination and Jatiya Nagorik Committee-led political party will be launched at the capital's Manik Mia Avenue at 3:00pm on Friday.

All details of the convening committee, including the names of its members, will be announced at the launch.

Leaders from both platforms confirmed the decisions at a press conference at the Nagorik Committee office in Bangla Motor yesterday.

- ⦿ Nahid, Akhter tipped to be convener, member secretary
- ⦿ Covenying committee to be announced at launch
- ⦿ Focus to be on "new Bangladesh"
- ⦿ 'Bangladesh Citizens Party' among names considered

Sarjis Alam, chief organiser of Jatiya Nagorik Committee, said, "It's our duty to continue the struggle that began with the July uprising and present to future generations the Bangladesh we dream of. With that in mind, the Students Against Discrimination and Jatiya Nagorik Committee are preparing to launch a new political party. At 3:00pm on February 28, we will formally announce the emergence of this new party at Manik Mia."

Sarjis added that the formation of a strong political party is the most significant demand for this "new Bangladesh."

"Over the past seven months since the uprising, our biggest realisation was that our dreams for a new Bangladesh require a long and arduous struggle."

In his speech, Akhter Hossen, member secretary of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, confirmed that the initial announcement would include the convening committee of the new party.

"We'll provide details about the leadership and committee members in a press release on the day of

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WHEN ART ROARS ... Through graffiti and paintings, students of DU's Fine Arts Faculty are raising public awareness and protesting against the recent surge in rape and sexual violence against women and children. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Joint forces to patrol the crime-prone city areas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided to deploy a joint security patrol of police, army, navy, and BGB in areas of the capital where the law and order situation has deteriorated.

Multiple checkpoints will also be set up throughout the city, with agencies stepping up their efforts to monitor and act upon security concerns.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam made the remarks yesterday after the end of a meeting held at the home ministry at the Secretariat.

In the meeting, several important decisions were made. The first decision was to increase patrolling

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Crime rates spike

This Jan worst in 6yrs, police data show; home adviser insists law and order 'satisfactory'

CRIME STATISTICS OF JANUARY

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Dacoity	71	29	27	30	33	39
Robbery	171	114	107	91	87	83
Murder	294	231	214	264	257	273
Kidnapping	105	51	31	39	45	39
Burglary	262	228	191	213	232	238
Theft	797	749	784	729	694	681

MUNTAKIM SAAD and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Murder, abduction, robbery, burglary, and theft have all seen a spike across the country in January this year compared to the corresponding month over the last five years, according to police data based on the number of cases filed.

The data come in a stark contrast with home adviser's depiction of the country's law and order situation as "satisfactory".

For example, at least 294 murder cases were filed with different police stations in January this year, up from 231 in the same month last year. The figures were 214, 264, 257 and 273 in the corresponding

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Delhi needs to decide the ties it wants with Dhaka: Touhid

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain yesterday said that Delhi needs to decide what kind of relationship it wants with Dhaka.

However, he stressed that if Bangladesh faces difficulties in obtaining visas, alternative solutions will need to be explored.

He made the remarks when asked to comment on recent remarks of Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's regarding bilateral relations between the two countries.

During a literary festival at Delhi University on Sunday, Jaishankar asserted that Bangladesh must decide what kind of relationship it seeks with India.

"He [Jaishankar] mentioned that

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1 killed in clash near air base in Cox's Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar



A man was killed and several others were injured in a clash between locals and air force personnel near an under-construction air base beside Cox's Bazar airport yesterday. The deceased was identified as Shahab Kabir Nahid, 30, of Samitipara in the beach town.

Joint forces have been deployed in the area to avert further escalation.

The Inter Services Public Relations Directorate (ISPR) said the clash broke out after "miscreants" from Samitipara launched a sudden attack on the base following an argument with a motorcyclist at a checkpoint.

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Bangladesh players shake hands with their New Zealand counterparts following a five-wicket defeat in Rawalpindi yesterday, a result that ended both Bangladesh and defending champions Pakistan's hopes of reaching the semifinals of the ICC Champions Trophy. New Zealand and India grabbed those two spots.

Nat'l Martyred Army Day today



PHOTO: FILE

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commemorating the sacrifice of army officers who were brutally killed during the carnage at the Pilkhana headquarters of the then Bangladesh Rifles in 2009, National Martyred Army Day will be

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TRUMP ON USAID FUND Dhaka should clear the air

Say experts

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh government should come up with a clarification as confusion emerged following the remarks made by President Donald Trump on USAID funding in Bangladesh, said development and governance experts.

They said such remarks might be politically motivated and meant for the American people, but it can affect Bangladesh's development sector that plays crucial role in the country's socio-economic and democratic development.

Addressing the White House Governors Working Session on Friday, Trump claimed that the \$29 million USAID fund landed with an obscure firm that he said was "a little outfit" with just two employees.

"They got \$29 million. A cheque! Imagine scraping by with

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Carry out duties with restraint

Gen Waker urges army personnel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman yesterday called upon the army personnel not to engage in any disorderly activities during their deployment.

"We need to ensure that no such unruly activities occur, and force should not be used," said Waker while speaking as the chief guest at the closing and award distribution ceremony of the Bangladesh Army's firing competition, held at the firing range of Savar Cantonment.

Waker urged the army personnel to carry out their duties with patience until a government is elected.

"We must continue working for the country until we have an elected government in place and peace and order returns to the country."

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To raise awareness against sound pollution and improve road safety, the environment ministry organised a day-long campaign at multiple locations in the capital, including the foreign ministry area where this photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Dhaka should clear the air

FROM PAGE 1
\$10,000 here, \$10,000 there -- and bam, \$29 million from the US government," he said.

"Two people! They're very happy. Very rich. They'll be on the cover of a top business magazine -- for being great scammers," quipped the US president.

Addressing the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Maryland on Saturday, Trump again accused the agency of funneling \$29 million to prop up a "radical left communist" in Bangladesh.

"\$29 million goes to strengthen the political landscape and help them out so that they can vote for a radical left communist in Bangladesh. You've got to see who they supported!"

This has confused Bangladeshis and NGO professionals, who have been worried since Trump's announcement of terminating US funding for the projects that don't align with his policy.

One American NGO whose name surfaced in relation to the \$29 million funding is Democracy International (DI), which got the fund from the USAID and UK's DFID for the Strengthening Political Landscape (SPL) in Bangladesh from 2017 to 2024.

The Daily Star emailed the DI for comments, but its Chief of Party Catherine Cecil said she has no comments on the matter.

An official who earlier worked for a project with DI said the US NGO has more than 40 employees and how the \$29 million fund can go to two people is not understandable.

"US President Donald Trump's remarks might be meant for the audience in America. It has no link with that of Bangladesh," the official told this correspondent.

According to NGO professionals, any NGO working in Bangladesh with foreign funding must secure approval from the NGO Affairs Bureau.

However, NGO Affairs Bureau Director General (acting) Md Anwar Hossain said they looked into their records and did not find any approval in favour of Democracy International.

"We have to check how Democracy International received the USAID funding and used it," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Abu Sayed, additional secretary and wing chief for America and Japan at the Economic Relations Division (ERD), said USAID sends quarterly reports to the

ERD on the amount of money disbursed for projects.

He, however, could not immediately provide details of the projects and funds coming from USAID.

Asked about the matter, Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said it might be possible that USAID has directly funded the US NGO in its own applicable process as part of a bilateral agreement between the US and Bangladesh.

In September last year, the USAID signed an agreement with the ERD for giving \$202 million in aid to Bangladesh, which is a part of USAID's total commitment of \$954 million to Bangladesh for the period of 2021-2026.

According to the ERD, through the 1974 Economic, Technical and Related Assistance Agreement, the US has contributed over \$8 billion across various sectors, including democracy and governance, food security, health, education, and climate change, primarily through USAID and other US agencies.

Iftekharuzzaman said the US NGO, as the principal awardee for the SPL project, appears to have funded some sub-grantees as implementing partners.

In such cases, non-US sub awardee NGOs, local or international, must have had approvals from the NGO Affairs Bureau, he said.

"Interestingly the USAID funding in Bangladesh is much more than what has been mentioned by the US President. I am not sure if the position he has taken is politically motivated," Iftekharuzzaman said, because the principal grantee US NGO may be linked with his arch political rival Democratic Party.

Hence, it is likely that Bangladesh is being dragged into US domestic politics, which on the other hand is facilitating smear campaign against a section of NGOs of Bangladesh by the ousted regime.

In addition to development support, the US has a multifaceted relationship with Bangladesh including trade, investment, education and not least diplomatic and strategic.

"Trump's parroted political rhetoric can therefore have implications on the bilateral relationship, which Bangladesh can neither ignore nor can any sensible US government wish away. Therefore, it is important that both sides work together sooner than later to clear the

confusion," he added.

Former ambassador to the US, M Humayun Kabir, said each and every penny of the USAID fund is calculated and the NGOs using the fund has to ensure transparency and accountability. There is no scope for the USAID to fund "two persons" as claimed by Trump.

"The USAID fund is not political party-blind. It works with all the political parties. So, you cannot say that the US NGOs work for this party or that party," he said, referring to Democracy International's collaboration with Awami League.

According to a statement of the Centre for Research and Information, a think tank of the AL, published in its website on June 11, 2016, DI has provided training and enhanced skills of thousands of political workers from all major political parties, including the AL.

The DI has also been working with CRI closely on research issues, it said.

AKM Jashim Uddin, director at the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh, the apex body of NGOs, said the remarks by Trump are akin to blaming the NGO sector in Bangladesh.

"People will question us. This is not fair, especially when the sector makes huge contribution to the country's development," he said.

It would not be wise for Bangladesh to accept what Trump said, he said, adding, "Bangladesh must come up with the right response. Otherwise, it will be an issue of dignity for us."

National Martyred Army Day today

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observed today.

The government issued a notification on Sunday, announcing February 25 as the National Martyred Army Day. The Cabinet Division instructed all ministries, divisions and organisations to comply with the observance annually. However, the day will not be marked as a public holiday.

A total of 57 high and mid-ranking army officers were killed in the February 25-26 mutiny at the BDR, now Border Guard Bangladesh, headquarters in Pilkhana. Seventeen others were also killed and most of their mutilated bodies were retrieved later from mass graves inside Pilkhana.

"The crime rate is influenced by the size of the population. It doesn't necessarily matter whether the crime rate is increasing or decreasing, but when high impact crimes rise, it creates a sense of fear among the public," he explained. "Do they even understand this?"

YOU'LL FEEL IT'

Despite such concerns, Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday insisted that the country's law and order situation remains satisfactory, although there is "room for improvement".

"You will see tonight [Monday] that our law enforcement activities have increased significantly. I have instructed everyone in the law enforcement agencies. You will feel this starting from the evening," he told reporters after a meeting of the "core committee" at the home ministry.

Among them, the February 17 robbery and sexual assault on a moving bus drew national attention, highlighting severe security lapses.

On February 17, a video went viral showing two men attacking a couple with sharp weapons in Uttara.

Earlier in January, 16 people lost

actions. At the same time, no one should be subjected to undue harassment."

Talking to reporters in Cumilla yesterday, Hasnat Abdullah, convener of Students Against Discrimination, expressed discontent about the law and order situation.

Between February 1 and February 24, 2025, dozens of crimes, including murder, rape, mugging, robbery, and extortion, have been reported across the country.

Among them, the February 17 robbery and sexual assault on a moving bus drew national attention, highlighting severe security lapses.

On February 17, a video went viral showing two men attacking a couple with sharp weapons in Uttara.

Earlier in January, 16 people lost

Stay alert, don't let fascism return

Says Tarique at Khulna rally

UNB, Khulna

Emphasising the need for unity among political parties, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday urged everyone to remain vigilant against the return of fascism.

"The fascist who fled the country will try to spoil our unity, and we all must remain alert," he said while speaking at a rally in Khulna city via video conference.

Tarique called upon those who have fought for over 16 years against the Awami League not to engage in infighting over trivial issues.

Holding the Awami League responsible for the destruction of democratic institutions during its rule, he said that restoring people's voting rights through a fair election is the main task.

Expressing optimism about his party's prospects, he said that BNP will win if the election is held fairly, and urged party activists to stand by the people in both good and bad times and to be responsible and acceptable.

He claimed that several lakh BNP activists faced "ghost" cases during their fight to restore democracy, while several thousand leaders and

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month of the previous four years, Police Headquarters data show.

Cases for robbery rose to 171 in the first month of this year, compared to 114 in January 2024. Abduction cases more than doubled in January this year from 51 in the first month of 2024.

An analysis of monthly crime data over the past six years revealed that the highest number of mugging and robbery incidents in a single month occurred in January 2025, with a total of 242 reported incidents.

Incidents of mugging, robbery and abduction also saw an increase in December and November last year compared to the corresponding months of the previous five years, according to the police data.

The rising trend appears to continue even amid "Operation Devil Hunt" that began on February 8 to restore law and order.

Omar Faruk, a professor at the Department of Criminology and Police Science at Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, told The Daily Star that they too have seen an increase in crimes, such as mugging, robbery, and theft in the last six months.

"Are these crimes, which are instilling fear among the public, truly a sign of satisfaction?" he said, criticising the government's claim that law and order was normal.

He added that people are living in fear of becoming victims of murder, theft, mugging, or burglary, and the government seems unconcerned, as it doesn't know how to address the issue.

"The crime rate is influenced by the size of the population. It doesn't necessarily matter whether the crime rate is increasing or decreasing, but when high impact crimes rise, it creates a sense of fear among the public," he explained. "Do they even understand this?"

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Earlier in January, 16 people lost

SOURCE: POLICE HEADQUARTERS

	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Dacoity	118	55	52	46	52	55
Robbery	292	184	166	158	160	161
Murder	415	460	455	482	530	508
Kidnapping	141	62	68	60	104	67
Burglary	468	405	426	376	469	416
Theft	1445	1366	1474	1319	1332	1161

The release of some top criminals after the political changeover last year, followed by a rise in reports of extortion, fuelled concerns over crimes in the city, said police officers and victims.

Moreover, arms and ammunition looted during the uprisings have fallen into the hands of criminals. As a result, the severity of crimes has increased, law enforcers and experts said.

Meanwhile, protesters under the banner of "Bangladesh against Rape and Oppression" have issued a nine-point demand, including the resignation of the home adviser within the next 24 hours. They also want him to apologise.

If the demands are not met, they will announce another torchlight march towards the home ministry this evening.

Joint forces to patrol crime-prone city areas

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in areas where law and order have deteriorated. Citizens will notice this enhanced patrolling starting this [Monday] evening," he said while addressing reporters.

He mentioned that law enforcement officers often face delays in reaching crime scenes and added that a decision has been made to provide additional motorcycles to security forces to ensure quicker response time.

Shafiqul Alam dismissed any claims of non-cooperation from law enforcement agencies, reiterating the government's commitment to ensuring public safety.

He said, "The government is taking the matter seriously, which is why today's [Monday] high-level meeting was held. Representatives from all security agencies, including police, Rab, army, BGB, navy, coast guard, and intelligence agencies, were present."

Leaders from all political parties in Bangladesh, families of the martyrs, injured activists from the uprising, and diplomats will be invited to the launch.

"We'll also honour those who fought for decades for a better Bangladesh, including activists from the student community, expatriates, and representatives from ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous communities, and others," Sarjis concluded.

Asked about "Devil Hunt", the home

adviser said the operation is being continued so that actions can be taken quickly when a crime occurs.

The home adviser said that law enforcement agencies are working tirelessly around the clock.

"You will see tonight [Monday] that our law enforcement activities have increased significantly. You will notice this starting from the evening," he added.

Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan, housing and public works advisor Adilur Rahman Khan, and special assistant to the chief advisor Khuda Baksh Chowdhury were present in the meeting, among others.

Meanwhile, at an event in Rajshahi yesterday, the Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam, said that specialised police units will soon be deployed to prevent muggings

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Students and citizens from all over the country took to the streets yesterday to protest the rising cases of rape and sexual violence. Clockwise from left, a scuffle between protesters and police took place near the Secretariat as demonstrators dismantled police barricades and tried to march forward. Earlier the protesters gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar under the banner "Bangladesh Against Rape and Oppression", demanding urgent reforms to address rising cases of sexual violence. Students of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College also held protests with similar demands in front of their campus on Bailey Road.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, ANISUR RAHMAN

Prioritise women's safety

Rights groups urge govt; express concern over worsening law and order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights groups have expressed deep concern over the worsening law and order situation in Bangladesh, citing a rise in gender-based violence, harassment, and restrictions on women's mobility.

They questioned the effectiveness of law enforcement and urged immediate and decisive action.

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) expressed solidarity with university students protesting sexual violence, rape, and attacks on women and children.

The organisation condemned the alarming increase in such crimes and called on authorities to prioritise women's safety.

In a press release yesterday, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam criticised the government's inaction, stating, "Every day, we read reports of rape, gang rape, and other forms of violence against women and girls. Even children are not spared. The recent rape on a Dhaka-Rajshahi bus has heightened concerns about women's safety and underscores the urgent need for secure public spaces."

For months, we have urged the interim government

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Anti-rape protests spread across country

Demonstrators demand home adviser's resignation

STAR REPORT

Students and citizens across the country took to the streets yesterday, demanding urgent action to tackle the worsening law and order situation and the rise in rape, sexual violence, and mugging.

In several areas, demonstrators called for the immediate resignation of the home adviser, holding him responsible for failing to ensure public safety.

A scuffle broke out between protesters and police near the Secretariat in Dhaka as demonstrators attempted to march forward, demanding the adviser's resignation over his failure to ensure women's safety. The clash occurred around 3:00pm when protesters dismantled police barricades and tried to move past them. Law enforcers pushed them back, forcing the demonstrators to stage a sit-in near Shikha Bhaban.

Earlier, protesters had gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar under the banner "Bangladesh Against Rape and Oppression", demanding urgent reforms to address rising

cases of sexual violence.

Their nine-point demand included immediate and thorough trials for all rape cases, legal reforms to strengthen laws on sexual violence prevention, and a redefinition

DEMANDS AT A GLANCE

- Immediate, thorough trials for all rape cases
- Reforms to strengthen laws on sexual violence prevention
- Redefinition of rape under Women, Children Repression Prevention Act
- Ensuring justice for all survivors
- Legally prohibiting rapists from marrying victims
- Anti-sexual harassment cells in edn institutions, workplaces

of rape under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000. They insisted that justice be ensured for all survivors, regardless of gender, sexuality, religion, race, nationality, disability, or age.

At Dhaka University, female students held demonstrations on campus in the evening, demanding security for women and the highest punishment for rapists.

"Why are we told not to go outside after evening? We have to work, go for tuition. Why should we have to fear for our safety?" a student asked during a protest rally in front of the Raju Memorial Sculpture.

At Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, students demonstrated in front of the main gate on Bailey Road from noon, demanding justice for rape victims.

"The rapists are getting away, but the police are doing nothing," said Snea Moni, a first-year HSC student. "If the government does not act, our movement will continue."

Another protester, who travelled from Narayanganj, said, "My parents are worried whenever I go out. This is the reality for all female students like me. We want to return home safely. The administration must ensure our security."

At Jahangirnagar University, students blocked the Dhaka-Aricha

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'Do not push country towards destruction'

Fakhrul warns parties demanding local polls before nat'l elections

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Holding local government elections before the national polls could lead to chaos and violence, said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam yesterday.

"A new game has started. Some parties and individuals are now insisting that local government elections must be held before the national polls. We have experience. If peace and law and order do not prevail, it will be impossible to control local elections," Fakhrul said at a rally in Dhamrai.

"Candidates will kill each other, fights will break out, fires will be set, and anarchy will spread. I don't know if this government is deliberately trying to create chaos or move towards civil war," he added.

Fakhrul urged the interim government to prevent such instability.

"To the parties calling for local elections first, I request you not to push the country towards destruction," he said.

While welcoming the formation of new political parties, Fakhrul warned against parties created by those in power.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Parties resist reforms that go against them

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul tells discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties do not implement reforms that go against their interests, said Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul yesterday.

Speaking on the proportionate electoral system, he said, "If a party is expected to win 250 seats under the existing system, it will not secure as many under the proportionate electoral system. That is why parties resist such changes."

He made these remarks as the chief guest at the unveiling of a study titled "Students' Perspectives and Expectations on State Reforms 2024" at Dhaka University. The Centre on Budget and Policy at DU organised the event.

Prof Nazrul said Bangladesh has many good laws, but legal reforms alone will not solve all problems. He stressed the importance of implementing achievable, immediate reforms to assure the public.

"These reforms may seem small, but they have a significant impact," he said, adding that the Consensus Commission is working on reform initiatives.

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Dancers perform at Nazrul Utsav which kicked off yesterday. The event celebrates the life and works of national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. The two-day festival, organised by the Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha at the Chhayanaut premises, will also run from 5:00pm to 9:30pm today and feature performances by over 100 artists from Bangladesh.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSVED

NAGAR PARIBAHAN BUS SERVICE Govt shifts to one route due to owners' resistance

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government is set to relaunch Dhaka Nagar Paribahan today on a single route, deviating from its earlier plan, reportedly due to opposition from transport owners.

Road Transport and Bridges Adviser Fouzil Kabir Khan will inaugurate the service at a programme in the Asad Gate area.

The specialised bus service will initially operate on the Gabtoli-Chasara (Narayanganj) route with 35 AC buses, with 15 more to be added later.

This move follows the failure of a pilot project aimed at operating all city buses under specific companies along rationalised routes.

The long-delayed initiative gained momentum after the interim government took charge in August last year but is now being implemented allegedly without proper preparation.

Transport experts see bus route rationalisation and a franchise-based system as potential solutions to bring order to Dhaka's public transport.

A franchise system would prevent

unhealthy competition among bus drivers for passengers, a major cause of accidents and congestion.

Under this system, buses in a particular zone would operate under a single company, with revenue shared among all companies.

Although discussions on bus route rationalisation have been ongoing for years, the initiative gained momentum when former Dhaka North City Mayor Annisul Huq took steps in this regard. However, it lost momentum again after his death in November 2017.

In June 2019, the High Court directed the authorities to bring all metropolitan bus services under the franchise system. Authorities initially planned for 22 companies to operate on 42 routes.

But the franchise system was not introduced until December 2021, when a pilot project was launched on the Ghatcharchar-Kanchpur route under the name "Dhaka Nagar Paribahan."

The service was later expanded to two more routes but failed due to a lack

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Prioritise women

FROM PAGE 3
to take strong measures to protect citizens, particularly women and children. Instead, the law and order situation has further deteriorated. Women and girls are now scared to leave their homes," she added.

"A clear message must be sent that such crimes will not be tolerated. Proper investigations and strict legal consequences are crucial to preventing further violence," said Shaheen Anam.

Meanwhile, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) echoed similar concerns over escalating threats to women's safety.

In a separate statement, the rights organisation highlighted increasing restrictions on women's mobility, despite legal frameworks designed to protect them.

The organisation stressed the need for preventive measures, including legal awareness and self-defence training in school curriculums.

"Empowering women with self-defence skills such as judo and karate is essential. Societal attitudes towards women must change to foster a safer environment," it added.

ASK also urged the government to prioritise survivor support, including legal aid, psychological counselling, and social reintegration programmes.

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) also condemned the deteriorating security situation.

"The state of law

and order has reached an unacceptable level, unworthy of any civilised society. This decline is tarnishing the country's global reputation. A surge in rape, bus robberies, sexual abuse, theft, and mugging has plunged the nation into lawlessness," it said in a statement.

BNWLA called for thorough investigations and swift prosecution of perpetrators, urging the home affairs adviser to take immediate action.

Do not push

FROM PAGE 3
"Certainly, new political parties can be formed, and we will welcome that. But if a party is formed while in power, people will call it a 'King's Party'. The people will not accept this," he said.

Fakhrul also demanded the withdrawal of cases against BNP leaders and activists.

"The cases have not yet been withdrawn. We still have to go to court and appear in hearings," he said.

Fakhrul accused the Awami League of attempting to erase political opposition. "We have not forgotten the killing of our Alems at Shapla Chattar. We have not forgotten the execution of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders. We have not forgotten the hanging of our leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury. They only wanted democracy and rights," he added.

Parties resist reforms

FROM PAGE 3

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Iltekhuruzzaman, also a member of the National Consensus Commission, said, "From my experience, no long-term reform proposals have been implemented... Elected governments forget their commitments after coming to power."

He also criticised the lack of a dedicated commission for the education sector despite its critical importance.

Badiul Alam Majumder, another member of the National Consensus Commission, said reforms remain stalled because people do not actively demand them.

"If we remain passive despite the sacrifices made for change, no reforms will materialise," he said. "If the structures that breed fascism are not dismantled and fair elections are not ensured, no meaningful change will occur."

Dhaka University Prof Samina Luthfa pointed out that state institutions have become the country's most failing entities and need urgent reforms. She also criticised the lack of

representation of women, marginalised communities, and indigenous groups in the National Consensus Commission.

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan said while the interim government has undertaken some reform initiatives, it has not been able to act in certain areas.

"There should be no difference between private and public universities, except in their management systems," he added.

Jatiya Nagarik Committee Joint Convener Sarwar Tushar said previous reform frameworks were not implemented due to a lack of political will.

He urged the government to ensure long-term reforms in line with the July Charter.

Prof Kazi Maruf Islam, who led the research, presented findings on students' perspectives regarding higher education, electoral reform, the Anti-Corruption Commission, the judiciary, public security, and law enforcement, alongside corresponding recommendations.

Anti-rape

FROM PAGE 3

highway demanding the home adviser's resignation for his failure to curb rising crime. Students marched from the Shaheed Minar premises at noon before taking to the highway, disrupting traffic.

"We can see that law and order has completely collapsed. Those who participated in the July revolution are being attacked," said Arifuzzaman Ujjal, a student of the 47th batch.

In Barishal, students from various schools and colleges staged demonstrations, held rallies, and blocked roads in protest against the surge in sexual violence, reports our local correspondent.

In Patuakhali's Bauphal upazila, students of Bauphal Government College waved red cards, denouncing rising crimes such as robbery, extortion, and murder, and demanding the home adviser's resignation.

Meanwhile, students in Thakurgaon staged a demonstration and blocked roads in the town with similar demands.

Protesters across the country warned that if authorities fail to take action, their movement will intensify in the coming days.

Govt shifts to one route

FROM PAGE 3

of cooperation from transport owners during the previous government.

DEVIATION FROM PLAN

After the political shift in August, following the July uprising, leadership changes occurred in transport organisations.

In December last year, a meeting chaired by Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan decided to launch Nagar Paribahan on all eight routes.

The Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority is overseeing the initiative on behalf of the government. However, the service is now being launched on a single route, which was also altered due to transport owners' demands, said sources.

The original route was Chasara-Sign Board-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Science Lab-Kalabagan-Asad Gate-Mohammadpur, which is route 21 under the Green Cluster. Instead, the route will now be directed to Gabtoli from Asad Gate, bypassing Mohammadpur.

Under the franchise system, all buses on a route should operate under a single company. However, in this case, only four companies running AC

buses will be included in the specialised service, said sources. DTCA has signed an MoU with Borak Paribahan, one of the four companies.

This means all other non-AC buses, operating under around 10 companies, will run on the same route, potentially leading to unhealthy competition.

Sources said transport association leaders oppose the franchise system as it could reduce their influence over the sector. However, they agreed to launch the service on a single route after higher authorities engaged with owners through a top workers' leader, said sources.

Meanwhile, despite today's launch, authorities have yet to complete the construction of all ticket counters, particularly outside the capital.

Contacted, Neelima Akhter, executive director of DTCA, said they are trying their best to start the service, having all stakeholders, including owners and police, on board.

Saiful Islam, general secretary of the Dhaka Road Transport Owners Association, could not be reached for comments.

DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Today is the 52nd death anniversary of Freedom Fighter **Abdur Rob (Boga Mia)** Ex-Member of the Constituent Assembly and President of the Pabna District Awami League.

He is remembered for his Honesty, Sacrifice and dedication for the people and the country. He was always true to his cause and principle which is envinously valued by the people of Pabna and the nation even today.

He died in a tragic car accident on the February 25, 1973. We pray for his departed soul, eternal peace and Jannat.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Opportunity Alert!

INVITATION TO BID

FAO Bangladesh invites experienced and qualified local suppliers to submit bids for establishing a 3-Year Long-Term Agreement (LTA) for the Procurement of Food Grain Storage Silos.

- ◆ Tender Reference Number: 2025/FABGD/FABGD/130956
- ◆ Publication Date: 20 February 2025
- ◆ Submission Deadline: 13 March 2025, at 11:00 Hrs. GMT+6
- ◆ Access the Tender & Submit Your Bid Now on UNGM: www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/259998
- ◆ How to register as a supplier on UNGM? <https://help.ungm.org/hc/en-us/articles/360012810860-How-to-register-as-a-supplier-on-UNG>

STATUTORY NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH

HIGH COURT DIVISION

(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)

Company Matter No. 178 of 2025

An Application under Section-81(2) read with Section 85(3) and 396 of the Companies Act, 1994.

AND

IN THE MATTER OF:

Tanvir Hasan Petitioner.

..... Respondents.

Starbase Limited and another

Statute of Limitations

Take Notice that an application under Section-81(2) read with Section 85(3) and 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the above named Petitioner for condonation of delay in holding the Annual General Meetings of Starbase Limited for the years 2022, 2023 and 2024 and relieving the Directors and officers of the Company from the liability of payment of fine or penalty. Upon hearing of the application on 02.02.2025 Hon'ble Company Judge Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel has been pleased to admit the said application and directed to file affidavit-in-compliance within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.

If any body is interested to oppose the said application he may appear before the Hon'ble High Court Division either in person or through an Advocate.

Copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary cost.

A.S.I.M Rizwan Siddique
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Mem No. 13197
Address: Room No. 5034, Annex Building

Mobile No. 01914734706



Hundreds of workers, who failed to travel to Malaysia on a calling visa despite paying recruiting agencies, staged a sit-in at Shahbagh yesterday morning. The protest programme also created traffic congestion on the road.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BANCAT launches cancer care village



CITY DESK

The Bangladesh Cancer Aid Trust (BANCAT) has announced the launch of the country's first ever cancer care village, "Alok Boshoti", said a press release.

The announcement came during the "Philanthropy Conclave 2025 – Fostering a Care Economy", held at a city hotel on Saturday. With support from Mutual Trust Bank, Sajida Foundation, Seven Rings Cement, and Abdur Rahim Memorial Trust, it will offer mental health support and cancer screening. The eco friendly project will use solar energy and organic farming, aiming to serve over 5,000 patients annually.

Sharmeen S Murshid, adviser to Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, BANCAT Executive Director Nazmus Ahmed Albab, Syed Mahbubur Rahman, MD and CEO of Mutual Trust Bank, and Runa Khan, founder and executive director of Friendship, were present at the event.

'DEVIL HUNT' 589 more held across country

UNB, Dhaka

The joint forces arrested 589 more people across the country in the last 24 hours till yesterday afternoon as part of the "Operation Devil Hunt", according to the Police Headquarters.

Additionally, 954 others, who were either accused or wanted in previous cases, were also arrested.

The joint forces also recovered arms and weapons including one foreign-made pistol, one locally-made pistol, 3 magazines, 12 rounds of ammunition and 250gm of cannabis. The government launched the operation on February 8 to restore law and order following an attack on "students and people" in Gazipur.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Sheikh Hasina Govt. Technical School & College, Amtali, Borguna.

e-mail: sheikhhasinates2021@gmail.com Web: www.shsc.borguna.gov.bd

Mem No: 37.03.0409.001.07.04.25.02 Date: 24-02-2025

e-Tender Notice (OTM)

e-Tender Notice (OTM)		Description of Goods	Tender opening date & time
Tender ID			
1074769		Supply of Other Stationery (Code: 3255105)	25/02/2025 Time: 15.00
1074770		Supply of Raw Materials & Spare Parts (Code: 3256105)	25/02/2025 Time: 15.05
1074771		Supply & Installation of Engineering & Others Machineries (Code: 4112304)	25/02/2025 Time: 15.10
1074772		Supply & Installation of Office Accessories (Code: 4112310)	25/02/2025 Time: 15.15
1074773		Supply & Installation of Teaching & Learning Materials (Code: 4112312)	25/02/2025 Time: 15.20
1074774		Supply & Installation of Furniture (Code: 4112314)	25/02/2025 Time: 15.25

This is online tender, where only e-tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of following Goods.

Md Mahbubur Rahman

Principal Sheikh Hasina Govt. Technical School & College, Amtali, Borguna. Phone - 01711106714

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানি উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (স্ট্রেড)

বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ

আইইই ভবন (১০ম ও ১১তম তলা), রমনা, ঢাকা

www.sreda.gov.bd

টেকসই ও নবায়ন

Aamir Khan says he hasn't charged salary for his films in 20 years

Amid ever-constant debates over Bollywood star salaries and entourages in Indian cinema, the profit-sharing model is gaining traction as a sustainable alternative, with actor-filmmaker Aamir Khan having adopted it years ago.

At an ABP live event, Aamir discussed the need to restructure star salaries for industry growth. Recalling *Taare Zameen Par*, he shared how he pursued it despite doubts and kept costs low by not charging upfront fees for his films.

Aamir believes that if audiences appreciate his work, he earns; if not, he doesn't. "I don't take a fixed salary," he revealed, adding that he has followed this model for over 20 years.

SAG Awards: 'Conclave', Moore, Chalamet among big winners



PHOTO: REUTERS

'Conclave' cast members flaunt their awards.

The 31st annual Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards wrapped up its ceremony last Sunday, spotlighting the best in film and TV just ahead of the Oscars. *Conclave* notably took home the top prize, which is the Best Ensemble Cast.

Timothée Chalamet won Best Leading Actor for *A Complete Unknown*, while Demi Moore took Best Leading Actress for *The Substance*. Kieran Culkin and Zoe Saldaña won Best Supporting Actor and Actress for *A Real Pain* and *Emilia Pérez*, respectively.

In TV, *Shogun* dominated, winning Best Drama Series Ensemble, with Anna Sawai and Hiroyuki Sanada earning individual acting awards. *Only Murders in the Building* won Best Comedy Series Ensemble, with Martin Short and Jean Smart taking top comedy acting honours.

Jessica Gunning (*Baby Reindeer*) and Colin Farrell (*The Penguin*) won for TV Movie or Limited Series. Jane Fonda received the Life Achievement Award.

The complete ceremony is available on Netflix.



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NEWS

Kiwis dash Tigers' hopes

FROM PAGE 12

On Monday, Ravindra hit 112 off 105 balls, his fourth ODI ton, and found good support from Tom Latham (55 off 76) and Devon Conway (30 off 45) as the Black Caps chased down the 237-run target in 46.1 overs.

Pacers Taskin Ahmed and Nahid Rana put New Zealand under pressure up front with some early wickets but Ravindra dealt with the early jitters expertly and formed a 57-run partnership for the third wicket alongside Conway and then a 128-run stand with Latham to take them near

the finish line.

Ravindra's sparkling knock, which included 12 fours and a six, ended in the 39th over when he holed out to long on off Rishad Hossain and Latham also got run out in the 42nd over but that didn't affect the outcome as Glenn Phillips (21 off 28) and Michael Bracewell (eight off 13) remained unbeaten to safely take them into the semifinals.

Rachin was also favoured by the Bangladeshi fielders thrice. Tanzid Tamim missed an opportunity to run him out when he was on 25,

then Mehedi Hasan Miraz dropped him on 93 off Rana and then finally Mahmudullah dropped him on 105 off Mustafizur Rahman.

Earlier, sent to bat, Bangladesh's strategy to attack all-rounder Michael Bracewell backfired tremendously as the innocuous looking off-spinner claimed career-best ODI figures of 4-26 to restrict the Tigers to 236-9.

Tanzid (24 off 24), Towhid Hridoy (seven off 24), Mushfiqur Rahim (two off five) and Mahmudullah (four off 14) – all of them got caught off Bracewell while trying to take

him on, squandering any hopes of Bangladesh posting a fighting total.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto top scored with 77 off 110 balls while Jaker Ali (45 off 55) and Rishad Hossain (26 off 25) made handy contributions down the order, pushing the total beyond 200 but it was never enough. Bangladesh will end their Champions Trophy campaign with a dead rubber game against Pakistan on Thursday at the same venue while India and New Zealand will face off on March 2 in Dubai to decide who will top Group A.

Bangladesh must adjust

FROM PAGE 12

countries and their trading partners but Bangladesh must enter into individual bilateral trading relationships, he said at the event organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue at the BRAC Centre Inn.

"That is, in fact, what will truly determine the trading regime of a country like Bangladesh, and the government will need to address this," said Sobhan, also the chairman of CPD.

He suggested intensive discussions with existing foreign investors to understand their concerns and constraints and using their input to revisit strategies for attracting foreign direct investment.

FDI inflow into Bangladesh remains low even though the country is one of the better-performing economies in the region.

"Why should we be receiving lower rates of FDI than a crisis-ridden country like Pakistan?" he said.

Commerce Adviser SK Bashir Uddin said every sector of the economy had been criminalised in previous years.

Unnecessary projects and money laundering have caused significant damage to the economy, he said, while emphasising scaling up productivity and diversification to boost export.

Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling, said diversification could occur within the garment sector as 75 percent of the exports are cotton-based whereas the global fabric demand is largely for

man-made fibres.

Bangladesh has the potential to diversify into man-made fibre-based products.

Diversification should extend beyond garment into labour-intensive sectors, complex products and skill-intensive goods production.

"There is no coordinated investment and industrial policy in the country. Moreover, policies are fragmented and do not align with each other. These should be coordinated," said Raihan, also a professor at Dhaka University's economics department.

Regulatory barriers need to be resolved, he said, while calling for implementing the recommendations made by a task force formed on September 10 last year to develop strategies for boosting the economy and mobilising resources for equitable and sustainable development. Raihan is a member of the 12 member task force committee that submitted its report on January 30.

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of Research and Policy Integration for Development, said the government needs to focus on the export sector to revive the crisis-ridden economy.

However, the country's trade policy is distorted as it incentivises entrepreneurs to sell products locally instead of exporting.

He called for streamlining the trade policy and improving corporate compliance and standards, even for local sales.

Razzaque also recommended

strengthening domestic revenue mobilisation, attracting FDI, improving the investment climate and engaging proactively with the EU to secure enhanced GSP Plus benefits, including duty-free access to garment products from Bangladesh.

He stressed the need to establish a World Trade Organisation-compatible export support mechanism, implement a smooth transition strategy and secure a free trade agreement with Japan.

BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said his party supports deregulation and liberalisation.

"We will pursue serious deregulation and liberalisation while reducing the government's role."

Export growth will remain stagnant until import liberalisation occurs, he said, adding that back-to-back letters of credit and bonded warehouse facilities should be extended to industries beyond the garment sector.

"If 10 sectors receive these opportunities, they will also be able to grow."

The foreign ministry should focus on trade negotiations in foreign offices to expand exports, said Chowdhury, who is also a former commerce minister.

Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the CPD, said Haiti and Singapore are among the most liberalised countries in the world but one is poor and the other is rich.

"So, I don't think import

liberalisation alone is the solution to increasing exports."

The focus should be on industrialisation, providing a conducive business environment, diversifying products and export destinations, and streamlining industrial policies, he added.

Mohammad Zaved Akhtar, president of the Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry, recommended prioritising the task force committee's proposals and developing a plan for 30 day, 60 day and 90 day implementation periods.

KAS Murshid, chairman of the task force committee, chaired the event, while Amrita Islam, deputy managing director of Picard Bangladesh, and Abdulla Hil Rakib, managing director of TEAM Group, also spoke.

Carry out duties with restraint

FROM PAGE 12

We must carry out this duty with patience until then."

The army chief said, "Disorderly conduct will not be tolerated during deployment. We must keep an eye on this. No use of force will be allowed to prevent any kind of unruly behaviour. Sometimes, in the process of doing this work, there is some use of force. However, if force must be used, it should be strictly proportionate and as minimal as possible."

"If we all work together, we will be able to restore peace and order in our country and get a beautiful, prosperous nation," he added.

1 killed in clash near air base in Cox's Bazar

FROM PAGE 1

Police sources and witnesses identified the motorcyclist as Jahedul Islam Jahed, an apprentice lawyer of Kutubdia Para.

They said the clash began around 11:00am after the argument over wearing a helmet.

At one stage, Jahed was taken inside the base camp. Hearing this, his associates, relatives and others arrived at the scene and started hurling brick chips at the under construction base and its personnel.

The witnesses added that the clash lasted for about half an hour, during which gunshots were heard.

Nahid was taken to the emergency of Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital around 12:30pm. Minutes later, doctors declared him dead.

Sabuktagin Mahmud Sohel, resident medical officer of the hospital, said Nahid's skull was severely damaged in the back. The body was sent for autopsy, and the cause of his death would be known later.

Motorcyclist Jahed was also taken to the hospital around 3:00pm for treatment, hospital sources said. He is involved in a movement to protect locals' land in the area.

As the news of Nahid's death spread, people wielding sticks began gathering near the air force base.

Former BNP lawmaker Lutfar Rahman Kajal came to the scene around 1:30pm and managed to calm things down, said witnesses.

Kajal said he had talked to the locals and air force personnel and hoped that the issue would be settled.

ISPR STATEMENT

Detailing the incident in a statement, the ISPR said a local man had been brought to the air base for questioning from a checkpoint, as he did not have the necessary documents for his motorcycle.

Then, as some 200 people from Samitipara advanced towards the base, air force personnel blocked their path.

As the number of locals swelled, a clash ensued between the air force personnel and local miscreants near the checkpoint.

The statement said the miscreants, "instigated by some vested interests", threw brickbats at the air force personnel.

Several people, including four from the air force (one officer and three airmen), were injured, according to the statement.

Nahid died after he was taken to a



Salman Shah-Shabnur starrer 'Jibon Songsar' returns to theatres

Salman Shah, Dhallywood's iconic '90s star, remains a beloved figure nearly three decades after his tragic passing. With his magnetic presence, and natural acting, he left a lasting legacy despite his short career.

Now, fans have reason to celebrate as one of his most beloved films, *Jibon Songsar*, returns to theatres, bringing nostalgia for long time admirers and a rare big-screen experience for the new generation.

Jakir Hossain Raju's directorial *Jibon Songsar*, a 1996 commercial hit, is now screening at Dhaka's BGB Cinema Hall, which recently re-released another Salman Shabnur classic, *Chaowa Thake Paowa*.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Moar-e Jabo' Comedy Night



Festive Rocks is all set to present tomorrow's open mic comedy show *Moar-e Jabo Comedy Night*. Open to aspiring comedians upon registration, the event promises an evening filled with laughter and fresh humor from both rising and new comedy talents. This lively gathering, with a Tk 50 entry fee, is sure to lift your spirits after long meetings, endless emails, and workplace stress.

Date: Wednesday | February 26

Time: 8pm onwards

Venue: Moar, Gulshan Link Road

INTERNATIONAL

GERMAN ELECTION Far-right surge 'last warning' for parties

Says polls winner Merz

AFP, Berlin

Germany's conservative election winner Friedrich Merz said yesterday that the surge of the far-right AfD to 20 percent voter support was "the last warning" to the country's mainstream parties.

The anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) scored its best-ever result in Sunday's election after a campaign marred by a spate of deadly car-ramming and stabbing attacks blamed on migrants.

Merz, of the centre-right Christian Democrats (CDU), has vowed a crackdown on immigration and a "zero tolerance" law and order drive to ease public fears and win back voters drifting to the far right party.

"This is really the last warning to the political parties of the democratic centre in Germany to come to joint solutions," Merz said at a Berlin press conference.

Merz pointed to the especially strong gains of the far-right party in the ex-communist east, the AfD's heartland.



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky with his wife Olena, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Antonio Costa, Canada's PM Justin Trudeau, Spanish PM Pedro Sanchez, and other leaders from European countries visit a makeshift memorial place displaying Ukrainian flags with the names of fallen service members at the Independence Square in Kyiv, Ukraine, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Era of 'dictators' could return

Warns UN rights chief as global system undergoing 'tectonic shift'

AFP, Geneva

The international system is in upheaval with human rights being "suffocated", the United Nations said yesterday, warning that an era of "dictators" could return.

During an opening address at the UN Human Rights Council's main annual session, UN rights chief Volker Turk painted a dark picture of a "very dangerous" situation in a world increasingly dominated by authoritarians.

He did not mention any country – even as the world grapples with the Russia-Ukraine war, dramatic changes in the United States and a more assertive China.

It was clear, he said though, that "the international system is going through a tectonic shift".

"The human rights edifice we have built up so painstakingly over decades has never been under so much strain."

UN 'gravely concerned' by violence in West Bank

Gaza truce in doubt as first phase nears end

AGENCIES

The UN chief yesterday voiced alarm at rising violence by Israeli settlers in the West Bank and calls for annexation after Israel announced expanded military operations in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Israel on Sunday said its troops would remain for many months in refugee camps in the occupied West Bank. Tens of thousands of Palestinians living there have been displaced by an intensifying military operation.

"I am gravely concerned by the rising violence in the occupied West Bank by Israeli settlers and other violations, as well as calls for annexation," Antonio Guterres told the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

He also stressed the importance of the fragile ceasefire in place in Gaza since January 19, reports AFP.

As the first phase of the ceasefire between

Israel and Hamas in Gaza is meant to be drawing to an end, it has once again been put in doubt.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said later on Sunday that Israel was prepared to resume fighting against Hamas after the Palestinian group accused it of endangering a five-week-old Gaza truce by suspending prisoner releases.

Hamas official Basem Naim said talks with Israel through mediators on further steps in a ceasefire agreement are conditional on Palestinian prisoners being released as agreed, reports Reuters.

The White House on Sunday backed Israel's decision to delay releasing the Palestinian prisoners, citing the "barbaric treatment" of Israeli hostages by Hamas.

The delay was an "appropriate response" to the Palestinian group's treatment of the hostages, a statement from National Security Council spokesman Brian Hughes said.

Hamas says talks with Israel depends on release of prisoners

UKRAINE WAR

Xi hails Russia's 'positive efforts'

AFP, Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday hailed Moscow's "positive efforts to defuse" the Ukraine crisis in a call with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

Xinhua news agency reported Xi as saying "China is happy to see Russia and relevant parties make positive efforts to defuse" the crisis in Ukraine.

Third party to reevaluate ongoing mega projects

FROM PAGE 12

a high-level committee to review incentives for exports.

For the power and energy sector, the task force suggested sustainable and alternative ways of power production instead of quick rental plants and independent power producers and the Planning Commission will publish the reports.

It

also

recommended

appointing

efficient

project

directors,

reducing

land

acquisition

time,

improving

interchange

facilities

on

the

roads

and

highways,

removing

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For

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and

improving

the

startups.

Chief

Adviser's

Senior

Assistant

Press

Secretary

Foyez

Ahammad

and

Assistant

Press

Secretary

Suchishmita

Tithi

were

also

present

at

the

media

briefing.

Stay alert, don't let

FROM PAGE 2

alleged that the AI has destroyed the country, which must now be rebuilt.

Presided over by Khulna city unit BNP convener Shafiqul Alam Mona, BNP chairperson's advisory council member Amanullah Aman, Party Vice Chairman Nitai Roy Chowdhury, Organising Secretary Aninda Islam Amit, Student Affairs Secretary Rakibul Islam Bakul, among others, spoke at the event.

চাকার ধ্রোয় কারিতাব
সম্পূর্ণ হাঁড়ি আবাসিক/বাণিজ্যিক

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(একিন্দুর প্লটে প্লটে প্লটে)

৩০০ ফিট
(জেলসিপি মেটার্জ এবং সেলস প্লটে)

২০ বিঘা

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD

Road Division, Faridpur

Phone/Fax: 0631/6256-66367

Email: eerhdfaridpur@gmail.com

RHD Quotation for Toll Collection

Sealed Quotation are hereby invited for the following work:

1	Leasing Quotation No.	:	FRD-01/2023-24 (16th call)
2	Description of Toll	:	Leasing out for collection of Toll from Different Vehicular Traffic Crossing the Gorai Bridge at 66th km of Daulatdia-Faridpur (Goalachamot)-Magura- Jhenidah-Jessore- Khulna Mongla (Digraj) (N-7) Highway Road Under Road Division, Faridpur during the year 2024-25, 2025-26, 2026-27 (3 Financial years).
3	Lease Period	:	03 (Three) financial years
4	Price of Quotation Scheduled	:	Tk. 5000/- (Five Thousand) only (Non-Refundable)
5	Earnest Money	:	10% of Total Quoted Rate (with VAT and IT) in form of B.D. or P.O from any scheduled bank of Bangladesh in favor of Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Faridpur.
6	Last Date & Time for Selling Leasing Quotation Document	:	09/03/2025 upto 5.00 pm
7	Last Date & Time for Receiving Quotation	:	10/03/2025 up to 12.00 pm
8	Eligibility of Quotator	:	Contractors in RHD or in any department/ any person or firm in Bangladesh (who possesses Nationality of Bangladesh, VAT Certificate and upto Date Trade License and Income Tax Certificate)
9	Name of Offices where Leasing Quotation will be Available	:	Divisional Commissioner, Dhaka Division, Dhaka/ Deputy Commissioner, Faridpur/Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Faridpur/ Madaripur/Sharifpur/ Gopalgonj/ Rajbari/ Planning Division- 1, Sankhabhawan, Tejga

Real action needed to curb crime

Home adviser must provide a clear plan to address public insecurity

We are quite worried about the deteriorating law and order situation in Dhaka and across the country. The severity of the crisis was evident on Sunday night when multiple serious crimes were reported in different parts of the capital within just a few hours. In recent times, there has been a noticeable increase in criminal activities in the city, prompting public outrage both online and offline. The situation outside Dhaka is equally dire. All this has created an environment of fear where citizens no longer feel safe going out alone.

Sunday night's incidents justified this growing insecurity. For example, a 43-year-old jewellery shop owner was attacked right in front of his house by miscreants who shot him in both legs when he tried to stop them from snatching away his belongings. Elsewhere, muggers robbed two women on a rickshaw just after midnight, the video footage of which went viral.

Naturally, public outrage is mounting, and most of it is directed at the home adviser now. The measures he has taken to improve security seem to have largely failed. Even the much-publicised Operation Devil Hunt—resulting in 8,664 arrests in 16 days—has not made a noticeable difference. Against this backdrop, the home adviser called a sudden press conference at three in the morning on Monday, where he claimed that the law and order situation had “largely improved” since he assumed office, and would continue to do so. He also alleged that cohorts of the ousted Awami League were behind the present security crisis.

However, while his warning about Awami League is one shared by many, his optimistic assessment about law and order does not reflect reality. We are also baffled by his decision to hold a press conference in the middle of the night—an unprecedented move—just to offer routine assurances without providing any concrete plans for tackling crime. This came across as particularly tone-deaf given that, just hours earlier, hundreds of protesters at Dhaka University were demanding his resignation for his failure to ensure public safety. Even on Monday, protesters demanding the same staged a sit-in in front of Shikha Bhaban after police blocked their march towards the home ministry.

Rather than addressing these concerns with transparency and accountability—which the interim government vowed to uphold when it first took over—the adviser instead put all eggs in the basket of faceless conspirators. This does little to inspire public confidence. Perhaps it is time for a performance evaluation of top government officials. If Awami League's cohorts are indeed behind rising crime, this is not just a law and order issue but a political one as well. The government should deal with it accordingly, along with its political stakeholders. But at the same time, it must take more effective steps to curb crime in Dhaka and elsewhere.

Govt inaction spurring sexual predators

Recent incidents of rape and violence call for urgent action

We are alarmed by the frequent incidents of rape and sexual violence reported across the country. On February 21, a fourth grader was raped in Rangpur's Mithapukur upazila when she went to collect flowers to pay tribute to the language martyrs. On February 16, a 22-year-old woman was gang-raped in Munshiganj. And just last week, two women were sexually assaulted on a moving bus on the Dhaka-Tangail highway by a gang of robbers. The list of such horrific incidents continues to grow. Unfortunately, the government's response to such crimes remains largely inadequate. In this regard, the silence of the women and children's affairs adviser—who is a women's rights activist herself—comes as particularly troubling. Such inaction only emboldens the criminals and heightens fear over women's safety.

It should be noted that the interim government has failed to effectively restore law and order even after the passing of more than six months. Besides crimes of sexual nature, mugging, robbery, and violent clashes between different groups have also increased nationwide. This naturally raises the question: what are law enforcement agencies doing to curb these crimes? And why are crimes against women and children not getting the attention they deserve?

Against this backdrop, students from various educational institutions in Dhaka and across the country have recently protested the surge in rape and sexual violence. They have rightly criticised the government's lacklustre efforts, demanding stricter law enforcement, overhauling of special tribunals for rape cases, enhanced protection for victims, a confidential reporting system for survivors reluctant to come forward, government-funded psychological rehabilitation services, etc. The authorities must take these demands seriously and implement effective measures without delay.

Violence against women has been pervasive in our society largely due to the prevailing culture of impunity that emboldens criminals. We have seen how successive governments failed to bring perpetrators to justice, and in many cases, offenders escaped accountability due to their political connections. Now that an interim government is in charge, it must break this cycle of impunity. Along with necessary legal and administrative reforms, it should engage with NGOs and women's and children's rights activists to develop a comprehensive action plan on sexual violence. The immediate priority must be arresting and prosecuting those responsible for the recent incidents of rape and sexual violence. The government must send a clear message that such crimes will not be tolerated in this new Bangladesh.

EDITORIAL

16TH ANNIVERSARY OF BDR CARNAGE

Children of three slain army officials speak to **The Daily Star** about their experience during the BDR carnage on February 25-26, 2009, the false narratives surrounding the incident, and their hope for a fair investigation.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

The horrors of BDR carnage still haunt me



Dr. Fabliha Bushra
is the daughter of slain Lt Col
Latifur Rahman Khan.

FABIHA BUSHRA

As I write this, 16 years after February 25, 2009, I am filled with a complex mix of emotions, something akin to relief and even astonishment at being alive and a profound grief of losing my beloved father to mindless violence. I, along with my family, was held hostage while my father was slain, along with many others not too far away from us. The day still feels like a vivid nightmare that I don't have the luxury to wake up from. For 16 years, I have been in the survival mode. That incident has robbed me and many others like me of a childhood, a chance at normal life.

Before we could even make sense of what was happening amid the sound of blaring gunfire and cars burning in front of our house, intruders barged into our home and dragged us out at gunpoint that morning. To our utter horror, they were men in uniform—BDR jawans, whom we looked at for protection and entrusted with our security. I, a 14-year-old then, and my six-year-old

brother held on to my mother tightly, as we ran for our lives as bullets were being fired at us too. When our phones were taken away, my mother pleaded with the jawans to let her speak to my father at least once. She thought we were being taken to safety and it was important to inform my father or he would worry about us. Not once did we think that these men intended to harm us or that my father would meet a fate much worse than us. In my mother's last conversation with my father, he asked her to take care of herself and keep us safe.

Instead of taking us to a safe place, they took us to a place called “Quarter Guard,” where we were held hostage with at least a hundred other families for 36 hours. We were thrown into a small cell that was already filled with injured, bleeding people. While they shoved us in, some of us were kicked in the back, and I was hit in the back of my head with a rifle butt. Many hostages including women and

children were beaten brutally. They had also captured several officers who were beaten to a pulp right in front of us. We were all screaming and praying for the Almighty's mercy as they threatened to torture and kill us.

Most of the time, we were ducking to avoid being shot. We begged for forgiveness and consoled the hostages right next to us who were our neighbours, friends, and playmates. As a teenage girl, my fear of death was layered with a very real possibility of being raped. My mother covered me with a large *ornal* as that was the most she could do, in hopes of protecting me from those barbarians.

All the time we were in captivity, I foolishly thought that my father, being a doctor, would be spared from the atrocities. I was proven wrong in the worst way possible when my father's body was found in a mass grave with 32 others. The feeling of getting a new chance at life, after being released from that hell, disappeared when I learnt of my father's killing.

There have been, and there will be, many political autopsies of BDR carnage, and the deaths will probably become just another statistic. Meanwhile, I am forced to make peace with the fact that I will never get closure and will probably have to spend the rest of my life trying to heal from something I had no part to play in. None of us did.

I am cautiously optimistic of the new investigation



Muhtasim Ittisaf
is lecturer at the Department of Chemical
Engineering at Bangladesh University of Engineering
and Technology. He is the son of slain officer Lt Col
Mohammad Sazzadur Rahman.

MUHTASIM ITTISAF

I was in my room when the BDR Jawans came and took us hostage on the fateful day of February 25, 2009. They took my entire family—my mother, my brother—and held us captive inside the Quarter Guard jail for two days, crammed into a small cell. They were firing their guns right in front of us and I was frightened for my family's safety.

We thought we were going to be freed when Sahara Khatun (the then home minister) arrived. Some weapons were surrendered to her, which was clearly just for show as we saw people picking the weapons back up once she left. It was a complete mockery.

We heard that the army tried to send a RAB unit inside, but the top brass allegedly did not allow it.

After our release, we were taken to Mirpur Cantonment. Then to my uncle's house in Dhanmondi. That was when we started getting the list of those who had been killed. I found out my father, Lieutenant Colonel Sazzadur Rahman, was among the martyrs.

It was deeply traumatic. I did not go to school for four months. Later, I got admitted to Adamjee and finished my studies there.

After the incident, we were terrified as everyone warned us not to speak of the then government's alleged involvement. They said “You have already lost so much. Do not risk your life further.”

But growing up in a military family, I heard things that made the government's involvement in the incident quite obvious. It was not possible for such a massive event to occur with just low-level political figures involved. There had to be higher-ups.

What confuses me even more is the appointment of the current home adviser. He headed the 20-member army probe committee on the BDR carnage mutiny in 2009 and allegedly amended the report thrice before presenting it to the media. And I believe political involvement in the carnage was covered up.

Some people claim that political and possibly foreign influence was

involved. Yet, no one points fingers directly because a certain quarter does not allow it.

For 15 years, nothing happened. The Awami League was in power, and many believe that there was clear involvement from people within their ranks. Some people even mention the names of Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh. There was a systematic effort to delay and bury the investigation.

While the families of the slain officers were subtly told not to point fingers at the Awami League, they tried to pacify us with offers of plots of land, one-time payments—things we did not ask for.

Thankfully, a new committee has been formed under Lieutenant General Fazlur Karim Chowdhury to probe the incident and Saquib Rahman, of slain officer Col Quadrat Elahi Rahman Shafique, is involved in it, representing the families of the martyrs.

I am cautiously optimistic that as long as this government stays in power, we might finally see real progress. That is why I hope the committee can release a preliminary report before the next election, clearly stating the involvement of not just BDR soldiers or army personnel, but of higher-ups, political figures, and possible foreign influences.

All we want is for the truth to come out, no matter who was involved. That is all.

Reject the flawed narrative on BDR carnage



Advocate Saquib Rahman
is senior lecturer of law at
North South University. He is
the son of slain Col Quadrat
Elahi Rahman Shafique.

SAQUIB RAHMAN

It was hurtful for the victims' families to see how some media outlets sympathetically portrayed the agonies of dismissed BDR rank and file who recently took to the streets. These riflemen and their families staged protests on January 8-9, claiming that the carnage was the result of Sheikh Hasina's conspiracy and that the riflemen were systematically framed and subjected to farcical trials as part of the plot. Undoubtedly, they were playing the victim card.

Since the recent court hearings on explosive cases, some media outlets began to highlight the miseries of the accused riflemen who received bail. They portrayed the struggle of the riflemen's families to make ends meet. While any prudent human being would have sympathy for the families, it must be noted that the trial of the BDR jawans is still in progress and their chances of conviction remain.

On January 29, at a press conference, we, the victims' families, strongly condemned the media's role in twisting stories and changing the narrative on the mastermind behind the killings and atrocities inside Pilkhana. Though we filed a complaint against Hasina and others in the International Crimes Tribunal, acknowledging that there was a conspiracy, that does not mean the first line of perpetrators, the riflemen, charged with murder, can be freed!

Meanwhile, the protesting riflemen and their families later changed their demands and no longer asked for the unconditional release of those convicted of assassinations.

On February 6, we, the victims' families, through the official Facebook page of our organisation, Shaheed Shena Association, put out a statement that we believe is reasonable.

We clarified that the protesting riflemen who were punished as per the erstwhile BDR service law for up to seven years, are within their rights to place their demand before the government for reinstatement (and compensation) in the force. We have no opinion regarding that. The government might review their applications and do as they deem fit.

Moreover, in the explosive cases where the riflemen are receiving bail, we, the victims' families, cannot certainly comment on the decisions made by the judiciary.

Lastly, we, the victims' families, acknowledge that the murder cases are with the Supreme Court's Appellate Division at the moment. Reinvestigation is not allowed once a court has taken cognisance of a matter. If the new BDR Investigation Commission reinvestigates the murder cases, it would be an interference in the criminal trial. However, we stated that provided there is any scope within the law to reinvestigate the murders, such a step may be taken.



Stop malicious attempts to increase gas, electricity prices



M Shamsul Alam is energy adviser at the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), and professor of electrical and electronic engineering at Daffodil University.

M SHAMSUL ALAM

During the tenure of the previous government, unjustified and irrational cost increases in various segments of energy supply chain continued for more than 15 years, leading to a persistent financial deficit in this sector. The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) made adjustments by increasing subsidies and tariffs. As a result, BERC lost its independence and neutrality as a regulatory body, depriving consumers of fair energy access and violating their rights.

Under the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act, 2010, investments in the power and energy sector continued without competition, further facilitating the predatory cost in energy supply increases. In 2023, an amendment (Section 34A) added to Section 34 of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission Act, 2003 transferred the authority to set all energy tariffs to the Ministry of Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources. Additionally, the following clause was inserted, "Until regulations are formulated by the Commission, the government may determine, revise, or adjust tariffs through a notification in the official Gazette."

Subsequently, the ministry frequently raised energy tariffs and adjusted the predatory costs, making the cost of living unbearable for the consumers and pushing the country's energy security into a severe crisis. As a result, people's fundamental rights were threatened. No significant improvement has been made to the situation yet.

Although BERC was established in 2003 as an independent regulatory body to ensure transparency in energy management, pricing, and consumer interest protection, it totally failed to exercise its power and authority. According to Section 22 of the law, BERC had the power to: i) determine efficiency and standard of the machinery and appliances of the institutions, using energy and to ensure through energy audit the verification, monitoring, analysis of the energy and the economy use and enhancement of the efficiency of the use of energy; ii) approve schemes on the basis of overall programme of the licensee and to make decision in this regard taking into consideration the load forecast and financial status; iii) extend cooperation and advice to the government, if necessary, regarding electricity generation, transmission, marketing, supply distribution, and storage of energy; iv) resolve disputes between licensees, and between licensees and consumers, and refer those to arbitration if necessary; and v) ensure appropriate remedy for consumer disputes, dishonest business practices or monopoly.

But BERC, acting as a subservient entity of the government, has only been involved in tariff determination over the past 15 years. It has refrained from engaging in the activities outlined in Section 22, meaning it has remained inactive. It

has also been inactive in exercising its powers. There has been no change in this situation till date.

Furthermore, the key considerations under Section 34 of the applicable law for determining energy tariffs are: i) harmonising the tariff with the costs of production, transmission, marketing, distribution, supply, and storage of energy; ii) efficiency, least cost, excellent service, excellent investment; iii) consumers' interest; iv) the commission shall determine tariff after giving hearing to licensees and others who have interest in it; and v) tariff determined by the commission shall not be revised more than once in a fiscal year, unless there is change in the prices of energy including any

repealed through an ordinance, Sections 2(b) and 2(c) were added to legally protect the injustices and criminal activities that were carried out under the repealed law. This deceived the public and reinforced the same predatory practices, proving that neither the government nor BERC has changed its stance.

The proposals by the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) for energy and electricity sector reforms, aimed at bringing down energy prices to a fair and reasonable level, have not been accepted. BERC has taken no initiatives to reduce predatory costs and tariffs. It has not provided any recommendations to the government either.

Instead, BERC's recently issued public notice reveals that a hearing has been scheduled for February 26, 2025, regarding the proposed increase in gas prices for industrial and captive power consumers under the proposal of Petrobangla and various gas distribution companies like Titas, Bakhrabad, Jalalabad, Pashchimanchal, Sundarban, and Karnaphuli. This indicates an impending increase in gas prices,

It is regrettable that, even after the July uprising and the change of government, no improvement has been made in this sector. Neither the ministry nor BERC has introduced any qualitative improvement. After the fall of the Awami League government, the interim government repealed Section 34A, which was specially added to the BERC Act. However, the sentence in the law stating, '... until the Commission formulates regulations, the government may determine, revise, or adjust tariffs through a notification in the government gazette,' was not repealed.

other changes.

Over the past 15 years, if the aforementioned considerations had been taken into account in tariff determination, the financial deficit in the energy sector could have been controlled. The need to frequently increase energy prices each year to manage subsidies would not have arisen, and there would have been no need to amend Subsection 34(5) of the law. The existing annual deficit in gas would not have reached Tk 20,000 crore, and Tk 42,000 crore in electricity. Gas prices would not have even risen to Tk 30 per unit. If the current BERC had properly considered these factors instead of following its predecessors, it would not need to consider the proposal to raise the gas price from Tk 30 to Tk 75.

It is regrettable that, even after the July uprising and the change of government, no improvement has been made in this sector. Neither the ministry nor BERC has introduced any qualitative improvement. After the fall of the Awami League government, the interim government repealed Section 34A, which was specially added to the BERC Act. However, the sentence in the law stating, "... until the Commission formulates regulations, the government may determine, revise, or adjust tariffs through a notification in the government gazette," was not repealed. As a result, the ministry has continued to determine the pricing of liquid fuel.

Furthermore, although the Special Provision Act, 2010 was

with electricity prices likely to follow.

Reports indicate that the current financial deficit in the gas sector is around Tk 20,000 crore per year, and there is a proposal to increase the price of gas used in industrial and captive power generation from Tk 30 to Tk 75. This proposal is in conflict with Sections 22 and 34 of the BERC Act, as well as the ideals of the July uprising.

In light of this, CAB, on behalf of consumers, urgently requested BERC in a letter dated February 13, 2025 to suspend the scheduled hearing and any subsequent actions regarding the proposed gas price hike until the following proposals are adopted and implemented: i) BERC must determine the total amount of unjust, irrational, predatory costs that have been adjusted in the supply of electricity, liquid fuel, coal, natural gas, LNG, LPG, solar and wind power from 2010 to 2024 under the previous government; ii) BERC must assess how much the cost of electricity and primary energy, as well as subsidies, can be reduced by eliminating predatory costs and profits while reducing government revenue; iii) a tribunal must be formed under the BERC Act, led by a retired Supreme Court judge, to prosecute energy criminals; and (iv) to ensure energy justice and protect energy rights, the BERC Act, 2003 must be reformed by a committee comprising stakeholder representatives.

Reduce the prices of oil, gas, and electricity; bring relief to the people.

Bangladesh must discard its archaic foreign policy



Alauddin Mohammad is the secretary of international relations and diplomacy at the Jatiya Nagarik Committee. He can be reached at alauddin012@gmail.com.

ALAUDDIN MOHAMMAD

The mass uprising of July-August 2024 has not only shaken Bangladesh's internal political structure, but also brought a monumental shift in its foreign policy and diplomatic approach. One significant outcome has been the government's newfound ability to distinguish between its true allies and adversaries in the international arena. This signifies a break from past submissive policies, marking a new era in Bangladesh's diplomacy—one that prioritises national dignity, self-respect, and equal status on the global stage.

For decades, Bangladesh followed the policy of "friendship to all, malice to none," a principle inherited from its early years of independence. However, the events of 2024 have exposed the weaknesses of this antiquated dogma.

A sovereign nation cannot afford to extend equal friendship to all while ignoring the power dynamics and self-interest that define global politics. Instead, Bangladesh must embrace a pragmatic and strategic foreign policy that acknowledges global realities, while serving its own interests.

The government's recent stance reflects a break from dependency-based diplomacy.

Despite knowing that India will not support its current leadership, the government has declared its intent to rely on the people rather than foreign powers. This newfound assertiveness signals a shift towards an independent and self-respecting approach, aligning foreign policy with the aspirations of its citizens rather than external pressures.

However, breaking free from a redundant foreign policy is not a new phenomenon; many nations have recalibrated their diplomatic strategies. China embraced economic openness in 1978, Turkey diversified alliances in the 2000s, and France asserted sovereignty in 1966. Yet, Bangladesh's previous regime long adhered to outdated policies, resisting necessary shifts in global engagement.

It prioritised select alliances over national interest and maintained a one-dimensional approach, compromising sovereignty and economic potential. This failure to modernise left Bangladesh diplomatically weak and economically dependent, hindering progress.

However, the previous regime's foreign policy was not merely about "friendship to all"—it extended "extra friendship" to certain countries, often at the cost of Bangladesh's sovereignty. A clear

example of this was seen in transit and transhipment agreements with India. Economists and pro-government analysts promoted the idea that Bangladesh would achieve economic prosperity similar to Singapore through these arrangements.

However, rather than benefiting from a win-win scenario, Bangladesh found itself trapped in one-sided agreements where its interests were repeatedly undermined. This realisation, fuelled by public sentiments in the wake of the mass uprising, has led to a re-evaluation of diplomatic engagements. Moving forward, Bangladesh must engage only with those who respect its sovereignty, and distance or insulate itself from those who exploit its resources under the guise of cooperation.

A nation's foreign policy should be a reflection of its people's aspirations. For Bangladesh, these aspirations are deeply rooted in the Liberation War of 1971, which was fundamentally a struggle for self-respect and human dignity. The uprising of 2024 has reignited these values, demanding that Bangladesh's diplomatic strategies uphold the same principles that guided its fight for independence.

First, human dignity must be a core principle in foreign relations. Bangladeshis are a major labour force across the globe, and their rights and dignity abroad must be a priority in diplomatic negotiations. Without a strong foreign policy that protects Bangladeshi citizens internationally, the nation will fail to assert itself as a dignified global player.

Also, the legal protection, fair wages, and humane treatment of the growing Bangladeshi diaspora seeking opportunities abroad must be ensured, making them an integral part of foreign agreements. If Bangladesh does not demand equal respect on the global stage, its citizens will continue to face discrimination and exploitation abroad.

This shift marks a significant departure from the submissive policies of previous administrations which often prioritised economic concessions over national pride. The government's new approach emphasises equal status, ensuring that Bangladesh is not treated as a subordinate in global negotiations.

Another key transformation in Bangladesh's foreign policy is the pursuit of equal dignity among nations. This principle dictates that Bangladesh, regardless of its economic or geopolitical stature, must be treated as an equal partner in international relations.

The United Nations Charter guarantees equal dignity to all nations, including Bangladesh, ensuring that no country, regardless of its size or economic power, is treated as inferior in international relations. Article 1(2) affirms the right of all peoples to self-determination and equal participation in global affairs, reinforcing that Bangladesh has the same standing as any other nation.

Similarly, Article 2(1) upholds the sovereign equality of all UN member states, meaning Bangladesh has the right to be treated as an equal partner in diplomacy, trade, and negotiations.

The UN Charter gives Bangladesh the legal and moral foundation to demand equal treatment, ensuring that it engages with the world on its own terms. This shift is not an act of defiance but a rightful alignment with international law, allowing Bangladesh to emerge as a respected and independent voice in global affairs.

Therefore, Bangladesh must reject policies that position it as a dependent state. Just as countries like Belarus, Chile, Mexico, and Pakistan assert their sovereignty, Bangladesh must demand the same level of respect. This shift in policy requires a strong leadership stance, one that refuses to bow to international coercion and instead negotiates from a position of strength. For that, sustainable diplomatic strategy is needed which will ensure that Bangladesh remains resilient against external pressures while steadily strengthening its global influence.

Historically, Bangladesh has been positioned as a "soft state", easily manipulated by regional and global powers. The uprising of 2024 has fuelled a new confidence, pushing the nation to adopt a bargaining stance rather than a submissive one. By shifting from reactive diplomacy to proactive engagement, Bangladesh can strengthen its democracy and economic standing without compromising its values.

The July-August uprising has redefined Bangladesh's approach to governance and diplomacy. The movement has not only exposed internal injustices but also highlighted the flaws of Bangladesh's submissive foreign policy.

As the country moves forward, the following principles must guide its diplomatic path: i) self-respect over subordination; ii) human dignity beyond borders; iii) equal status among nations; iv) sovereignty above external influence; and v) a sustainable, assertive approach to foreign policy.

The era of passive foreign policy is over—a new Bangladesh is emerging, and it refuses to be dictated by external forces and instead asserts itself as an equal and sovereign player on the global stage.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Rapid Action Battalion Forces Headquarters
Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229
www.rab.gov.bd

Invitation For e-Tender

For financial year 2024-2025, e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of:

SL	Tender ID No & Reference No	Description of goods	Last selling Date & Time	Closing/ Opening Date & Time
1.	1079202, RABHQ/CPS/2024-2025/3258105/280 Date:23-02-2025	Repairing and Maintenance of Equipment	11-Mar-2025 10:00	11-Mar-2025 12:00
2.	1079153, RABHQ/CPS/2024-2025/3258116/279 Date:23-02-2025	Repairing & Procurement of PABX Equipment and other Accessories	11-Mar-2025 10:00	11-Mar-2025 12:00

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

To submit e-tender, registration in the national e-GP system portal (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 guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

Tenderer having clarity requirements are requested to contact at 01777-720118 (Senior Assistant Director, Central Procurement Section).

(KAMRUL HASSAN)
Commander, BN
Director (Admin & Finance)
RAB Forces Headquarters, Dhaka.

Tamam Na Sud

Decoding Syed Mujtaba Ali's *Shabnam*

On another count *Shabnam* can be seen as groundbreaking in Bangla literature. There are only a few Bangla novels written by men where women are cast as the central figures. Even though there were two protagonists in *Shabnam*, Ali did not hesitate to put *Shabnam* in the lead.

NAZES AFROZ

Tamam na sud or 'Not the end'! There could not have been a better ending of a captivating romantic novel like *Shabnam*. These three words at the end of the book ignite a plethora of emotions in the mind of the reader as they start to identify themselves as one of the two protagonists – *Shabnam* or *Majnun* and even start to imagine a sequel that will not end in a heart-wrenching tragedy. This way the readers embark on an everlasting journey with the book.

Syed Mujtaba Ali did not venture into fiction writing much. Despite producing a huge body of work, he had only three novels to his name, *Obissayo* (1955), *Shabnam* (1960) and *Tulonaheena* (1972). Of the three, *Shabnam* stands out to be the most powerful one in terms of its story outline, the building of the characters, the ending and the philosophical quest of the two protagonists—a feisty independent



Syed Mujtaba Ali (1904–1974)



Syed Mujtaba Ali in his early years

where women are cast as the central figures. Even though there were two protagonists in *Shabnam*, Ali did not hesitate to put *Shabnam* in the lead. *Shabnam* is poetry personified, as she is aware of Sufi mysticism. She is hopelessly in love with the 'foreigner' *Majnun* but she is not the demure damsel. She is the one who initiates the romantic liaison and then she takes it to the next level by visiting his home alone. Even when there was looting and lawlessness all around, she did not stop visiting him. She was ready to take a few lives to do that, "I would have killed every devil. Any number—if needed, I held the revolver ready under the burqa. If anyone stood in front, I would have shot him. No questions asked. I would have walked over their dead bodies to come to meet you."ⁱⁱⁱ She is the one who kisses *Majnun* first and she decides to arrange an instant marriage with him fearing that the political pandemonium would linger. She floats in the clouds of poetry yet she expresses her strongest opinion on how to change the society, "Is society a tiger or a lion that we have to confront it with pistols and guns? Society is like a spirited stallion. Feed it and then mount. If it misbehaves, poke it with the spike of your boots. Whip it if it becomes worse. When it becomes unmanageable, then use the pistol. Buy a new horse—create a new society."^{iv}

My tryst with *Shabnam* started, long before I took up its translation, in the transition year of my teenage into adulthood. At that delicate age,

milieu against which *Shabnam* was written. But the reading of *Deshe Bideshe* before taking up *Shabnam* also raised a question: was that an autobiographical novel?

Readers of *Deshe Bideshe* and *Shabnam* would always find uncanny similarities between Ali himself and *Majnun* – the male protagonist he created. Like Ali, *Majnun* came to teach in Kabul from the district of Sylhet in East Bengal in undivided India. One of the central figures of *Deshe Bideshe* is Abdur Rahman – Ali's most trusted servant, his "major domo, chef-de-cuisine and handyman – three in one" who apparently would "do all the bidding for you, from polishing your shoes to killing your enemies"^v. Abdur Rahman became "my Harfan-Moula, my Jack of all trades"^{vi}. In *Shabnam*, *Majnun*'s servant too is called Abdur Rahman who was undertaking similar tasks!

In *Shabnam* Ali created another trusted aide to *Shabnam*, Topol Khan who happened to be Abdur Rahman's cousin. These two, Abdur Rahman and Topol Khan, became the go between the two lovers and help them in their assignations. They also agreed to be the happy witnesses to their instant secret marriage in the house of *Majnun* while the city of Kabul was descending into a chaos.

Hence, the Bengali readers always speculated if *Shabnam* was actually an autobiographical novel. The readers liked to believe that Ali had a romantic liaison with an Afghan woman while living in

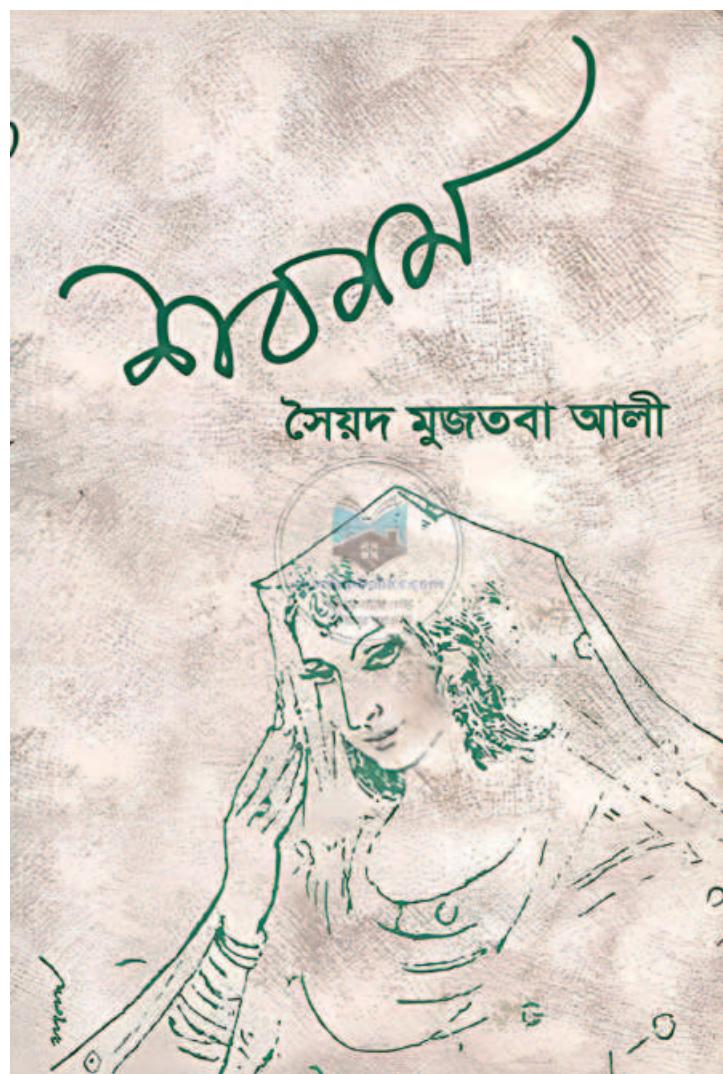
After my translation of *Shabnam* came out in 2024, a close Afghan friend wrote the following to me after reading it, 'Finished the book but had an unstoppable feeling throughout that this had happened during my life time because so many people disappeared and never returned including two people in my extended family and many more known to me.' This comment by my friend suddenly sowed the seed of an idea in my mind about the genesis of the story of *Shabnam*.

Most readers of Ali would know that he was a master at picking up nuggets of stories around him and finessing them as highly readable and outstanding tales that germinated from real-life experiences. Stories

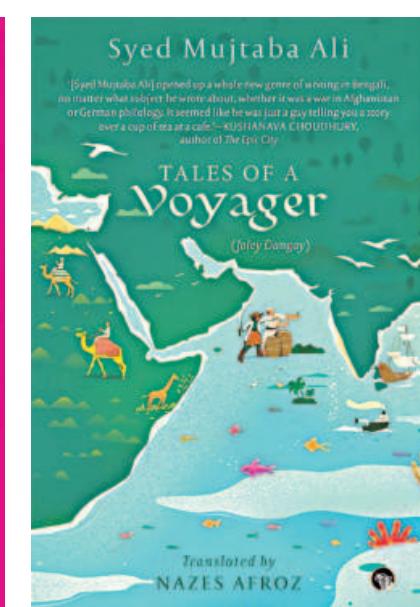
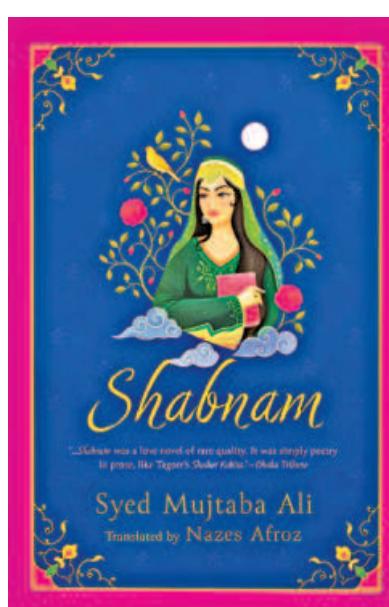
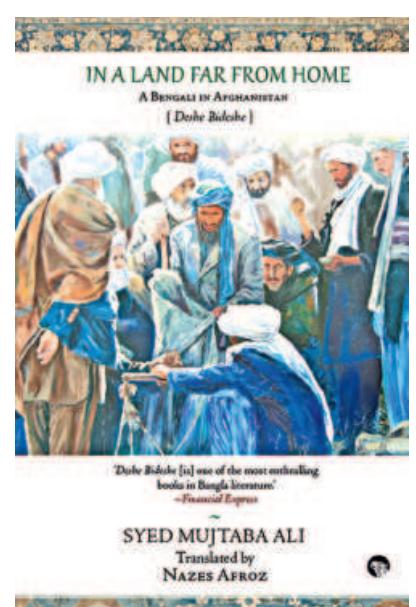
as *Shabnam* – a most beautiful woman (he repeatedly talked about the beauty of Afghanistan in his writing) who was fiercely independent (as Afghanistan is)? He lamented so many times that how Afghanistan had been searching for peace that had been eluding her for centuries. Ali himself was there in Kabul when there were glimmers of hope, but that vanished into thin air in no time. Ali did not go back to Afghanistan after his stay there for a year and a half. He remained estranged with the country he loves so much. Hence, in a way he might have taken the role of *Majnun* and depicted Afghanistan as *Shabnam* and continued searching for her, in vain, for the rest of his life.



Bacha-e-Saqqao with his followers. During the Afghan Civil War (1928–1929), he overthrew King Amanullah Khan and seized large parts of Afghanistan.



Cover of *Shabnam*, designed by Khaled Chowdhury



Covers of English-translated works of Syed Mujtaba Ali, translated by Nazes Afroz

young Afghan woman and an erudite Bengali teacher teaching in Kabul.

The love tragedy between *Shabnam* and *Majnun* unfolded in the backdrop of a tribal rebellion against the modernizing king Amanullah that set off an unimaginable degree of lawlessness and chaos in Afghanistan at the end of the 1920s. But that history did not encroach on the story unnecessarily; it came only as much as it was needed. Mujtaba Ali himself lived through that turbulent time in Kabul and nearly died there starving. His memoir of the period became his first book—*Deshe Bideshe*^{vii} (1948–49). There is an oblique reference to the book in *Shabnam* too.

On another count *Shabnam* can be seen as groundbreaking in Bangla literature. There are only a few Bangla novels written by men

one tends to expect a happy ending of such an intense love story that revolves around only two characters who engage in poetry, aesthetics and philosophy all through. As this unlikely love flowered breaking the barriers of culture and language when Afghanistan was hurtling towards anarchy. The tragic ending created such a sadness and hollowness in me as a reader that I could not read that book for another decade or so.

I laid my hands on *Shabnam* for the first time possibly a year after I read Ali's magnum opus *Deshe Bideshe*, that established him as one of the most important and charismatic writers of Bangla literature in the second half of the twentieth century. So the backdrop of *Shabnam* was already known to me. I did not have to struggle to understand the social and political

Kabul between 1927 and 1929. But Ali did not leave any suggestions of such a relationship in any of his writing. If we take *Deshe Bideshe* as a true and authentic eye-witness account and a chronicle of a crucial juncture of modern Afghan history, then as readers, we are left with the only conclusion that *Shabnam* is indeed a work of pure fiction. Ali's nephew and former Bangladeshi senior diplomat, Syed Muazzem Ali told me that he had asked his uncle if someone akin to *Shabnam* ever existed during his time in Kabul.

In his reply Ali had said, 'Nephew, try to stretch your imagination!' In relation to this speculation, Ali himself wrote in one of his pieces that during his stay in Kabul, he had regular interactions only with two women – one used to supply milk to his house and the other was the laundress and both were above sixty.

from *Chacha Kahini*, or other stories like *Tuni Mem*, *Nona Pani*, *Nona Jol* and many such pieces are testaments of this genre of his writing.

The story of *Shabnam* did not happen in Ali's life for sure but what if he had seen or heard about a love story where one of the lovers simply disappeared like *Shabnam* as my friend commented from his own life experience? I would say that was most likely the case.

By reading *Deshe Bideshe*, we know how deeply Ali bonded with the elite class in Kabul and even befriended many from a number of diplomatic missions. Some of these friends and their exploits found mentions in *Deshe Bideshe*. We even read how his Pashtun colleague-turned-friend Dost Muhammad simply left the city leaving a letter for him saying he had picked up the gun and was going to fight the bandit leader Bacha-e-Saqqao on behalf of his king Amanullah. Ali never heard of him after that. Ali wrote about Dost Muhammad's charm and witicism, especially among the women in the diplomatic circles. So, could Dost Muhammad be one of the lovers who disappeared? Or any other person whom Ali got to know during his stay but never mentioned them in *Deshe Bideshe*? Such a possibility is highly likely.

There may be another lens through which *Shabnam* can be read. One could take it that Ali decided to tell the story of a country, that he fell in love with, through allegory. His fondness, deep empathy and endless love for Afghanistan was evident in every chapter of *Deshe Bideshe* and also in *Shabnam*. Could he have painted the picture of Afghanistan

Notes:

ⁱ Translated by Nazes Afroz, published by Speaking Tiger books, India in 2024

ⁱⁱ Translated by Nazes Afroz titled *In a Land Far from Home/A Bengali in Afghanistan* published by Speaking Tiger Books in 2015

ⁱⁱⁱ P 100; P 103: *Shabnam* (2024) Speaking Tiger Books

^{iv} P. 74: *Shabnam* (2024) Speaking Tiger Books

^v P 103: *In a Land Far from Home/A Bengali in Afghanistan* (2015) Speaking Tiger Books

^{vi} P 101: *In a Land Far from Home/A Bengali in Afghanistan* (2015) Speaking Tiger Books

^{vii} P 101: *In a Land Far from Home/A Bengali in Afghanistan* (2015) Speaking Tiger Books

Nazes Afroz has worked as a journalist for more than four decades in print and broadcast media, 18 of which for the BBC, covering current affairs spanning South, Central and West Asia in the capacity of a producer and later as a senior editor. Currently based in Kolkata, he writes in Bangla and English for a number of newspapers and websites. Apart from co-authoring a cultural guidebook on Afghanistan, Afroz has translated Syed Mujtaba Ali's *Deshe Bideshe* into English under the title *In a Land Far from Home: A Bengali in Afghanistan* (2015) *Joley Dangay* under the title *Tales of a Voyager* (2023) and *Shabnam* (2024), all published by Speaking Tiger Books in India. As a passionate documentary photographer Nazes has held several exhibitions in countries across three continents from 2015 including his work on the Kabuliwalas of Kolkata.

We don't score 300 runs regularly and that's the reality: Shanto

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Rawalpindi

Another meek batting display saw Bangladesh eliminated from the race for the semifinals of the ICC Champions Trophy following a five-wicket defeat against New Zealand in their second Group A fixture at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The defeat also saw hosts as defending champions Pakistan bow out from the group stages as New Zealand and India, who have won both their matches, grabbed the two qualifying spots from this group.

The match was all but over as a contest after the Tigers could only post a well-below-par 236-9 in their stipulated overs after being sent into bat first.

The Tigers' batting effort followed a similar meek display following their six-wicket defeat to India in their opening match in Dubai on February 20.

Poor shot selection, playing far too many dot balls, lack of planning against spinners and untimely dismissals resulted in the chaotic batting display on a rather flat surface dished up in Rawalpindi.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto's 77 off 110 balls while batting as an opener after 27 months and Jaker Ali's 55-ball 45 may seem like decent contributions, but



PHOTO: AFP

considering the surface and the demand of the team, their performances didn't deserve that much of credit either.

"It's really disappointing as a captain," Shanto told reporters at the post-match press conference.

"...I think as a batting group and fielding side, we need to improve a lot. I

said a lot of times that we need to improve a lot as a batting unit. But we did the same mistakes over and over again.

"We have to really focus on how to improve our batting. I hope after this tournament, we will make some changes as a batting unit and think about different ways and try to improve our batting," he concluded.

added.

When asked to be more specific about the kind of changes he was talking about, Shanto insisted that there should be change in their thinking and working process, not any change of players.

"I didn't mean that there will be changes in the players. I think we need to make changes in our thinking process. We need to take more responsibility while batting in order to contribute more for the side.

"Actually it's about us to do it. If we make too many changes, it will be difficult for that batsmen as well. So we have to give the opportunities to the resources that we have," said Shanto, admitting that they are not a team who can score 300-plus every day.

Since the 2023 ODI World Cup in India, Bangladesh played 23 matches including yesterday's one and posted 300-plus total on only one occasion.

"We don't score 300 runs regularly. This is the reality and we have to accept that," said the 26-year-old skipper.

"We need to make a habit of scoring 300 runs regularly; not once in a while. So we need to practise and play matches on good wickets regularly, play against big teams and score these runs," he concluded.

Trailblazer Ayonto draws 'hope' for Mahatos

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU from Pabna

From humble beginnings to the national stage, Ayonto Bala Mahato's journey reads like a script from a feel-good film.

Born into a poverty-stricken indigenous family in Sirajganj's Raiganj upazila, she spent her childhood in a mud-walled hut topped with a tin roof. Her parents, both labourers, worked tirelessly, earning barely enough to put food on the table.

But then, football stepped in and changed everything.

At just 16, left-winger Ayonto is set to represent Bangladesh in two FIFA friendly matches in Dubai on February 26 and March 2, having flown to the UAE with the squad yesterday.

Her selection stems not only from her undeniable talent but also from head coach Peter Butler's decision to opt for a younger squad. Following a player-coach dispute, 18 senior players from the SAFF Women's Championship-winning team last year in Nepal were left out, creating opportunities for fresh faces like Ayonto.

Her inspiring ascent to the top has sent ripples of joy across the village of Grotthita.

The daughter of farmer Monil Mahato,



Ayonto discovered football on the fields of her local primary school. Despite the struggles they faced, her family always encouraged her passion.

"My sister has loved football since childhood, so we enrolled her in an academy in the village three years ago... We found out about her selection a few days ago," her brother, Joy Kumar Mahato, told The Daily Star, with pride evident in his voice.

That academy was Nimgachhi Promila Football Academy, where Ayonto's remarkable potential quickly caught the attention of scouts. While still in the sixth grade, she earned a coveted spot at the prestigious BKSP.

Life, however, was not easy for her family, as they earned only around Tk 600 a day. Witnessing their relentless struggle, Joy took on a job in a local shop to support the family -- after Monil became unable to work due to ill health -- and to contribute to his sister's dreams.

Despite these hardships, Ayonto flourished. After completing her initial training at BKSP and putting up a dazzling show in the BKSP Cup held earlier this year, she became a strong candidate for a spot in the national team, informed BKSP assistant coach Mahbubur Rahman Litu.

"If she stays in the national camp for 3-4 years, her future will be bright," opined Litu.

For Ayonto, this breakthrough is "beyond expectations," and success is not merely a personal triumph; it is a monumental milestone for the Mahato community.

"As a poor farmer, my only dream was to feed my family. But my daughter has given us something greater -- hope," her father Monil expressed.

Uzzal Kumar Mahato, a local social worker, said, "No one from the Mahato community [in North Bengal] has ever played for the national team. She is the first, and we are immensely proud."

South Africa hold a narrow advantage over Australia in overall head-to-head records in ODIs, winning 55 matches against Australia's 51. Three encounters between the sides ended in a tie and one meeting produced no result.

The Proteas have also won four out of the five ODIs against Australia.

Australia and South Africa have never faced each other in the ICC Champions Trophy.

Since 2016, South Africa have batted first 12 times against Australia in ODIs and lost only two of those matches. The most recent of these defeats was the semifinal of the 2023 ODI World Cup.

Australia's Glenn Maxwell is 17 runs away from 4000 ODI runs. South Africa's Lungi Ngidi needs one wicket to complete 100 wickets in the format.

Aus, SA collide with semifinal spot up for grabs

AGENCIES

Australia will face South Africa on Tuesday in Rawalpindi, where the winner will take an enormous stride towards the semifinals of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025.

South African captain Temba Bavuma on Monday said his side would not be taking world champions Australia lightly despite a depleted bowling attack.

The two former Trophy champions meet for the first time in the event's history, having each won their first games in Group B.

Australia -- missing their pace trio of Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc -- chased down a stiff 352 run target against England in Lahore -- on Saturday.

It was the highest-ever chase in the event's history started in 1998.

Bavuma hailed Australia's penchant for International Cricket Council (ICC) events.

"I mean any Australian outfit that comes together for an ICC event is always one that you don't take lightly," said Bavuma in a press conference.

"They don't have their mainstay bowling attack but I think their batters may be doing a little bit more than what they're accustomed to," he added.

Bavuma hopes his own batters will take advantage of Australia's inexperienced bowling.

South Africa blunted the famed Afghanistan spin attack, taking 59 runs off world's best Rashid Khan in 10 wicket-less overs.

Alex Carey said Australia are excited by the challenge posed by a formidable South Africa.

Carey made a brilliant 69 alongside man-of-the-match Josh Inglis, who scored his maiden one-day international hundred, to seal a five-wicket win.

"I think South Africa are playing really well in one-day cricket and look like they've got a great balance across their 11 players," the 33-year-old Carey said on Monday.

"So, another exciting opportunity for us coming off the back of a great game against England, play with a lot of freedom, take the game on."

Tony promises to return to Bangladesh for adopted daughter

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Rawalpindi

Eight months ago, curator Tony Hemming parted ways with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) while still having a year left on his two-year contract, expressing dissatisfaction at some of the incidents during his short tenure.

The renowned curator was hired by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in the very next week on a two-year contract.

Considering Tony's reputation as a leading curator and the way his previous tenure ended in Bangladesh, it is very unlikely that the Australian will rejoin the BCB any time soon.

Still, during a lengthy discussion with a few Bangladeshi journalists in Rawalpindi, Tony was asked whether he plans to return to Bangladesh anytime soon.

His reply stunned everyone.

"I have to [return to Bangladesh]... I adopted a daughter in Bangladesh," Tony came up with this unexpected reply.

"She is in Sylhet. She is not young, she is 20, she works in a hotel," he continued, detailing how this unique bond was formed.

"I stayed in Sylhet for a period of like three weeks, preparing a Test wicket. We were talking every day at breakfast. She told me she was an orphan and

was raised without parents. Her manager was an orphan also. The orphanage recruits orphans to work at the hotel, to promote them and to give them an opportunity.

"I missed my daughter in Melbourne, because she is grown up and I don't hear much from her... So, I just sort of had this feeling that I want to help her," he said, and also described the many ways he has helped his Bangladeshi daughter.

"I helped her get a passport, helped her financially, and you know, it's literally all I've done. It's just encouragement, you know. It's just to say good morning every day, if you need anything let me know, if you're in trouble let me know, that's all there is to it."

"I don't need to [get documentation]. If they are over 18, legally, there is no problem. It's like an uncle thing, you know. It's just

helping someone. The same in Pakistan, you come across people, you see that they are genuine, you see that they are struggling, I feel blessed about the things that I've been doing now," Tony said, who also has four children from two marriages.

***The names of the adopted daughter and the hotel have not been disclosed to respect their privacy**



Salah seeks 'another title' for Liverpool veterans

AFP, Manchester

Mohamed Salah said Liverpool's veterans need another Premier League title after inspiring a 2-0 win at Manchester City to surge 11 points clear at the top of the table.

The 32-year-old, captain Virgil van Dijk, Alisson Becker, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Andy Robertson were all part of the Liverpool side that ended a 30-year wait to win the title in 2020.

And Salah reiterated his belief that they need another Premier League winner's medal to burnish their legacy.

"Maybe people prefer my first seasons or now but I prefer now because winning the league, helping the young players, it is special," he added.

"We need another title. Me and the big guys in the team, we need another title."

Salah was central to a statement win for the Reds as he opened the scoring and then teed up Dominik Szoboszlai to double Liverpool's lead before half-time.

Arne Slot's men are in a commanding position to secure a record-equalling 20th English top flight title, although second-placed Arsenal have a game in hand.

"Hopefully we keep calm because sometimes the pressure gets to us," said Salah, who took his tally for an incredible season to 30 goals and 21 assists.



➤ Salah is the first player in Premier League history to register 40 plus goal involvements in two different seasons (2017-18 and 2024-25).

➤ Salah has now recorded 41 goal involvements (25 goals and 16 assists) in 2024/25 in just 27 appearances. The Egyptian needs six more to match the Premier League record for most goal involvements, jointly held by Alan Shearer (1994/95) and Andy Cole (1993/94).

➤ The 32-year-old is the first player to score 25+ goals and register 15+ assists in a Premier League season.

➤ Salah has now scored and assisted in 11 Premier League games this season, the most by a player in a single season in one of Europe's big five leagues since Lionel Messi for Barcelona in 2014/15 (11).

➤ Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola has lost more games against Liverpool than any other opponent in his managerial career (10).

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Kiwis dash Tigers' hopes

STAR SPORTS DESK

Bangladesh's hopes of making it to the semifinals were reduced to dust after they suffered a five-wicket defeat to New Zealand in their second Group A match of the ICC Champions Trophy at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium yesterday, courtesy of a scintillating century from Rachin Ravindra.

With two defeats in two matches, having earlier lost to India in their opening game by six wickets, Bangladesh are now out of contention for a spot in the semifinals while visitors New Zealand and India have made it through to the semifinals from Group A.

Bangladesh's defeat also ended Pakistan's chances of making it to the semifinals. Just like the Tigers, Pakistan are winless after having lost to New Zealand and India.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



A fire swept through Sajek Valley, a popular tourist spot in Rangamati's Baghaichhari upazila, yesterday, destroying over 140 establishments, including resorts, shops, and homes. The blaze that broke out around 12:30pm was brought under control after nearly four hours.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

EC won't be ready for local govt polls by June: CEC
Says nat'l election schedule has to be announced in Oct for Dec polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin yesterday hinted that it is not possible to hold the local government elections by June as the voter list updating work is underway.

He said that their target is to conduct the national election in December. "If it is to be held in December, we must announce the polls schedule in October."

The CEC made the remarks at an event at the Electoral Training Institute auditorium in Agargaon, organised on the occasion of the new committee of Reporters Forum for Election and Democracy taking charge.

Regarding the local body polls, the CEC said, "The Local Government Reform Commission has suggested that elections can be held in June. That would be possible only if 1.6 million deceased voters are not removed and the elections are conducted without including new voters. The voter list updating process will be completed in June."

The reform commission has made the proposal from its perspective. They [the commission members] are learned and knowledgeable people. The CEC has no comments on this. There is already a political debate on the matter, and the Election Commission does not want to get involved in it."

The CEC stated that they do not want to make any comments in advance. They are proceeding with the election preparations as per the chief adviser's announcement.

He said that several applications regarding the re-demarcation of parliamentary constituencies are pending. Due to legal complexities, they are unable to resolve them.

"The commission has already proposed amendments to the relevant laws to the government."

RIFT ON UKRAINE Macron, Trump vow to work together

AFP, Washington

French President Emmanuel Macron and Donald Trump sought to smooth over a transatlantic rift on Ukraine yesterday, with the US president eyeing a deal to end Russia's invasion "within weeks" backed by European peacekeepers.

Hosting Macron at the White House on the third anniversary of the Russian invasion, Trump also said he expected Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky to visit this week or next, to sign a deal giving Washington access to Kyiv's minerals.

Trump hailed Macron as a "very special man" as they shared one of their trademark macho handshakes in the Oval Office -- with the French president seeking to use his ties with Trump to shore up support for Ukraine.

"I think we could end it within weeks -- if we're smart. If we're not smart, it will keep going," Trump said.

The US president added that Russian President Vladimir Putin was ready to "accept" European troops deployed in Ukraine as guarantors of a deal to end the fighting.

Macron said that both leaders wanted a "solid long lasting peace," proclaimed that Europe was ready to "step up" defense spending and reiterated that Europe was ready to deploy peacekeepers.

But he said he wanted "strong" US involvement in any such plan.

Both Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer -- who is visiting the White House on Thursday -- have said their countries are ready to contribute peacekeeping troops in Ukraine if there is a deal.

Third party to reevaluate ongoing mega projects

Decides high-level meeting led by CA; task force report on economy discussed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has decided to reevaluate the country's ongoing mega projects through a third-party, citing political influence led to an average 70 percent overvaluation of mega projects undertaken during the Awami League rule.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said this at a media briefing at the Foreign Service Academy about the decisions of a high-level meeting on the country's economy held at the office of Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday.

Yunus chaired the meeting.

Shafiqul said due to the overvaluation of the mega projects, public money worth about \$14.24 billion was lost.

Finance Adviser Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, Industries Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan, Planning and Education Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud, Commerce Adviser Sheikh Bashir Uddin, Food Adviser Ali Imam Majumder, Principal Secretary to the Chief Adviser Md Siraj Uddin Mia, BIDA Executive Chairman Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun, Finance Division

Secretary Dr Md Khairuzzaman Mozumder and Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Ahsan H Mansur were present, among others, at the meeting on the country's economy.

At the meeting, they discussed the report recently submitted by the task force on re-strategising the economy and mobilising resources for equitable and sustainable development.

The report identified corruption in development projects, irrational avoidance of taxes, and flaws in supply chain management as major factors of corruption during the last regime.

As such, the government has decided to introduce e-filing at all its offices, aiming to make its tasks smooth and check corruption.

Citing the examples of other countries, the press secretary said the e-filing helps bring down corruption to a minimal level.

The task force also made a number of recommendations, including in the areas of economy, education, health, social protection and employment, agriculture, fisheries and animal

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5

**CTG LOAN COURT
'Lauded' judge abruptly removed
Bank officials express concerns**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Joint District Judge Mujahidur Rahman of the Chattogram Money Loan Court has been removed from his post and attached to the Law and Justice Division of the law ministry without being given any specific charge.

The transfer order was issued yesterday by the Law and Justice Division.

Judge Mujahidur gained popularity for his bold decisions, including imposing travel bans on loan defaulters, issuing arrest warrants, ordering the bringing back of fugitive defaulters to the country, appointing receivers for mortgaged properties, and questioning the Election Commission for allowing defaulters to contest upazila elections.

He had passed orders and issued arrest warrants against major loan defaulters such as Saiful Alam of S Alam Group;

SEE PAGE 7 COL 3

Bangladesh must adjust

Rehman Sobhan says about changing global context

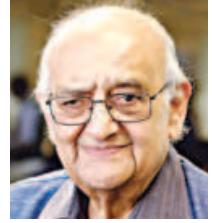
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Considering the current and upcoming international political context, Bangladesh needs to focus on improving bilateral trade relationships with a wide range of countries, noted economist Rehman Sobhan said yesterday.

Certain countries, particularly the powerful ones, are now using various tariffs and economic sanctions as political instruments, he said at the inaugural session of the two-day conference styled "Recommendations by the Task Force on Re-Strategising the Economy".

"First, the US, then the EU, and now the other countries are also slowly employing this. This world is now changing. So how does a country like Bangladesh adjust to this? We are sitting around with our tongues hanging out, thinking that since tariffs are going to be raised on Chinese exports, we will automatically be able to step in and fill that vacuum. But I don't really think that's how the game is going to be played."

Bilateral relationships will prevail between the big



SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

ABRAR MURDER Condemned killer fled from jail on Aug 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muntasir Al Jemy, sentenced to death for the murder of Buet student Abrar Fahad, escaped from prison on August 6 last year, but the authorities kept the information from Abrar's family until yesterday.

The revelation came as Jemy's lawyer failed to appear in court for legal arguments, raising suspicions.



Convict Jemy

Abrar's younger brother, Abrar Faiyaz, addressed the matter in a Facebook post yesterday evening, expressing outrage over the delayed disclosure.

Deputy Attorney General Md Jasim Sarker confirmed the news to The Daily Star, saying that Jemy fled on August 6 last year. At least 209 prisoners escaped that day from Kashimpur Central Jail in Gazipur during a jailbreak.

Contacted, Jannat Ul Forhad, assistant inspector general (Development and Media) of the Department of Prisons, confirmed to The Daily Star that Jemy escaped from Kashimpur prison on August 6 last year.

"The prison authorities filed a case with the Konabari Police Station the same night. Jemy is one of the named accused in the case," he added.

"Jemy was supposed to be held in a condemned cell. How did he escape?" Faiyaz said.

"The fact that this information was withheld for so long only proves that no attempts have been made to recapture Jemy," Faiyaz added.

Meanwhile, the High Court is set to deliver its verdict any day on the death references and appeals of the convicts in the Abrar murder case.

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Family members of victims of the Gazi Tyre Factory fire on August 27, 2024, form a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka, demanding that the government let them know the whereabouts of their missing loved ones.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

EU suspends key sanctions on Syria

AFP, Brussels

The European Union yesterday eased sanctions on Syria's energy, transport and banking sectors in a bid to help the country's reconstruction after the fall of Bashar al-Assad.

Syria's new leaders have been clamouring for the West to ease sanctions imposed to target Assad's regime during the civil war.

But Europe and other powers have been reluctant to move before clear signals from the new Islamist-led rulers in Damascus that they are serious on having an inclusive transition.

The step approved at a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels includes suspending sanctions on the energy and transport sectors, as well as allowing transfers to five banks and making funds available to Syria's central bank.

"The EU aims to facilitate engagement with Syria, its people, and businesses, in key areas of energy and transport, as well as to facilitate financial and banking transactions associated with such sectors and those needed for humanitarian and reconstruction," the bloc said.