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Shilpakala DG hands in resignation letter after fiery speech

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

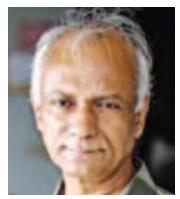
Noted theatre personality Syed Jamil Ahmed, in a surprise move, handed in his resignation as director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy yesterday, citing "bureaucratic challenges" and "restrictions on artistic expression".

He announced his resignation at the closing ceremony of the "Munier Chowdhury Prothom Jatiya Natya Utshab", organised by the BSA training department, where Jamil Ahmed attended as chief guest.

Jamil gave a fiery speech before the audience before informing them of his resignation.

"I accepted the position out of a sense of duty."

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Syed Jamil Ahmed

Shrine set on fire in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

A shrine was vandalised and set on fire by a group of people in Ghiorghat, Dinajpur, yesterday.

Devotees at the Rohim Shah Baba Bhandari Mazar in the Singra area were preparing for their two-day annual Urs, scheduled to begin on March 2.

Urs is an Islamic function observed to commemorate the death anniversary of a saint.

Locals said a group of men calling themselves Sirat-e-Mustaqeem Parishad had been lobbying for a ban on the Urs, claiming that the event promoted un-Islamic activities like music, drugs, and other immoral acts.

On February 24, the group submitted

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Afghanistan's Azmatullah Omarzai smashes one over the cow corner as Australia wicketkeeper Josh Inglis looks on during their ICC Champions Trophy Group B fixture at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday. The all-rounder's 63-ball 67 propelled the Afghans to 273 all out in 50 overs, but the match was called off due to rain after Australia made 109 for one in 12.5 overs.

PHOTO: AFGHANISTAN CRICKET BOARD

Australia into semis after Afghan match called off

AFP, *Lahore*

The all-important ICC Champions Trophy Group B match between Australia and Afghanistan in Lahore ended in a no result due to rain, sending Australia through to the semifinals while leaving Afghanistan's hopes of making it to the top four on the brink.

Australia, chasing 274 to win, were 109-1 after 12.5 overs with Travis Head and Steve Smith unbeaten on 59 off 40 and 19 off 22 respectively before rain halted play and did not allow it to resume.

With one point from the match, Australia edged South Africa and jumped to the top spot in Group B with four points in three games.

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US President Donald Trump and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky meet in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

'Make a deal or we're out'

Trump slams Zelensky over not being 'thankful enough' at Oval Office meet, says Ukraine leader risking WWIII; Zelensky leaves without signing deal

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky clashed in an extraordinary shouting match in the Oval Office yesterday, leaving efforts to end the war with Russia hanging in the balance.

"You're either going to make a deal or we're out," a furious Trump told Zelensky, as a meeting that was meant to ease tensions over the sudden US outreach to Russia ended up inflaming them. "And if we're out, you'll fight it out and I don't think it's going to be pretty."

"You're gambling with the lives of millions of people. You're gambling with

World War Three, and what you're doing is very disrespectful to this country," Trump added.

Zelensky was at the White House to sign a deal on sharing Ukraine's mineral riches and discuss a peace deal with Russia, despite the US president recently branding his Ukrainian counterpart a dictator.

The meeting came after a week-long diplomatic dance that has also seen the leaders of France and Britain come to the White House to persuade Trump not to abandon Kyiv.

But tempers frayed after Vice President JD Vance said that "diplomacy" was needed to end the war. Zelensky

asked "what kind of diplomacy" and Vance then accused him of being "disrespectful" in the president's office.

"Mr president, with respect, I think it's disrespectful for you to come into the Oval Office to try to litigate this in front of the American media," Vance told Zelensky.

"Have you ever been to Ukraine that you say what problems we have?" Zelensky shot back.

"I've actually watched and seen the stories and I know that what happens is you bring people, you bring them on a propaganda tour," Vance continued.

"Mr president. Do you disagree that

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Democracy not safe until elected govt in office Says Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman believes the upcoming national election presents a crucial opportunity to build a safer Bangladesh for all, irrespective of religion and social class.

He said that until an elected government takes office, the country's democracy remains at risk as conspiracies to create instability persist despite the ouster of the autocratic regime.

Tarique made these remarks while virtually addressing the biennial conference of the central committee of the Sree Sree Jamastami Udjapan Parishad Bangladesh at JM Sen Hall in Chattogram city yesterday afternoon.

He sought support and cooperation from the Hindu community to help build a democratic election.

Reaffirming the party's commitment to equality, Tarique said that every citizen, regardless of ethnicity, religion, caste, belief, or non-belief, has equal rights under the BNP's policy.

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Four lemons for Tk 120!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



With just a day remaining before Ramadan begins, lemon prices in the capital's kitchen markets have skyrocketed, frustrating consumers.

The retail prices of four lemons (one hali in Bangla) at Karwan Bazar kitchen market were between Tk 40 and Tk 120 yesterday, depending on the size and quality.

Four small-sized lemons were sold for Tk 40, up from Tk 20 a week ago, and medium-sized ones were at Tk 60, previously Tk 30.

Large lemons were available at prices ranging from Tk 80 to Tk 120 for four pieces. A week ago, the prices were between Tk 60 and Tk 80.

Md Nazir, a regular shopper, was surprised to find that four lemons cost Tk 120, up from Tk 70 just a week ago.

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বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ

বিদ্যুৎ, জ্বালানি ও খনিজ সম্পদ মন্ত্রণালয়

আসন্ন শ্রীম ও সেচ মৌসুম এবং পবিত্র রমজান মাসে নিরবচ্ছিন্ন বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহের লক্ষ্যে পরিমিত ও সাশ্রয়ী বিদ্যুৎ ব্যবহারে সমানিত বিদ্যুৎ গ্রাহকগণের প্রতি আহ্বান

- সেচ পার্সে নিরবচ্ছিন্ন বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ নিশ্চিতের লক্ষ্যে রাত ১১ টা থেকে সকাল ৭ টা পর্যন্ত সেচ পার্স চালু রাখুন।
- বিদ্যুৎ ও জ্বালানি সাশ্রয়ী ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত করার লক্ষ্যে ওয়েট এন্ড ড্রাই পদ্ধতিতে সেচ কাজ সম্পাদন করুন।
- লোডশেডিং এড়াতে এসির তাপমাত্রা ২৫ ডিজি সেলসিসিয়াস বা তার উপরে রাখুন।
- দোকান, শপিং মল, পেট্রোল পার্স ও সিএনজি স্টেশনে অতিরিক্ত বাতি ব্যবহারে বিরত থাকুন।
- অতিরিক্ত আলোকসজ্জা পরিহার করুন, বিদ্যুতের অপচয় রোধ করুন।
- কোন কারণে বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহে বিল ঘটলে দৈর্ঘ্য সহকারে অপেক্ষা করুন এবং কর্তৃপক্ষকে অবহিত করুন।
- বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ এবং অধিনস্থ সংস্থা/কোম্পানিসমূহের হটলাইন ও কন্ট্রোল রুমের ফোন নম্বর:

সংস্থা/কোম্পানির নাম	অনুসন্ধান হটলাইন নম্বর	কন্ট্রোল রুমের ফোন নম্বর
বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ	১৬৯৯৯	০২-৪৭১২০৩০৯, ০১৭৩৯-০০০২৯৩
বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ড	১৬২০০	০১৭০৮-১৪৯৫০২, ০১৭০৮-১৪৯৫০৩
বাংলাদেশ পান্তি বিদ্যুতায়ন বোর্ড	১৬৮৯৯	০২-৮৯০০৫৭৫, ০১৭৯২-৬২৩৪৬৭
ডিপিডিসি	১৬১১৬	--
ডেসকো	১৬১২০	--
মেসকো	১৬৬০৩	--
ওজোপাডিকো	১৬১১৭	০২-৪৭৭২৪৪৭২, ০১৭৫৫৬৮৭৮১

Israel wants to extend 1st phase by 6 weeks
Say Egyptian security sources;
Hamas opposes extension

AGENCIES

An Israeli delegation in Cairo aims to negotiate to extend the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire deal by an additional 42 days, two Egyptian security sources said yesterday.

Hamas opposes the extension and insists on proceeding to the second phase of the deal as originally agreed, the sources told Reuters. The second phase is meant to include steps leading to a permanent end to the war.

The first phase of the ceasefire is set to end today, and the warring parties have yet to clarify what will happen if no agreement is reached by then. Egypt and Qatar are mediating the talks, with US support.

In a statement yesterday, the Palestinian group urged the international community to press Israel to immediately enter the second phase without any delay.

Two Israeli government officials had told Reuters that Israel was seeking to extend the initial phase, with Hamas freeing three

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