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USAID FUND CUT Job losses shock development workers

PORIMOL PALMA

Saiful Alam (not his real name) built his career in the development sector, working in the finance departments of foreign-funded projects in Dhaka for over 15 years.

But now, at 47, he faces a harsh reality he never anticipated -- abrupt unemployment. With no other income, he and his family may soon be forced to leave the capital, where his two children are enrolled in a reputed school.

He is losing his job as the US Agency for International Development (USAID) has already issued a termination letter for the project he has been working on for the last three years.

"I am currently closing the accounts and preparing final paperwork for submission to the USAID in Washington," Saiful told The Daily Star yesterday. "After that, I'll give myself a month to find another job. If nothing comes up, I'll have no choice but to return to my village."

With more than a decade of experience in development finance, Saiful

I don't think I'll find another position in the development sector. And why would a private company hire me at a senior level?
Says an NGO professional who is losing his job

fears that opportunities in the shrinking sector are scarce. My entire career has been in development projects, but the industry is now imploding.

"I don't think I'll find another position in the development sector. And why would a private company hire me at a senior level?" he said.

The prospect of relocating to his village is very real. "It will be extremely difficult for me, my family, and my children to adjust. I have no idea what I will do for a living or where my children will go to school. It's frustrating."

Saiful's plight reflects the broader crisis in the sector. With funding drying up and livelihoods at stake, the future of many in the sector remains uncertain.

He is just one of tens of thousands of development professionals facing joblessness following USAID's decision to cancel the majority of its nearly 100 projects in Bangladesh. These projects, implemented by around 400

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TEARS OF JOY, RELIEF
Overwhelmed with emotion, teachers celebrate the Supreme Court's ruling that cleared the way for the appointments of 6,531 assistant teachers in government primary schools. On February 6, the High Court ruled in favour of a writ petition that challenged their appointments based on the previous quota system. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon outside the National Museum in Shahbagh. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Caught between tide and torture

Freed fishermen share tales of captivity under the Arakan Army

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN,
back from Cox's Bazar

For 17 days, Mahmudul Hasan, a 35-year-old Bangladeshi fisherman, was held captive in a remote camp controlled by the Arakan Army in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

He had spent two decades fishing, navigating the delicate maritime boundaries between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

On February 11, Mahmudul and his

three-member crew unknowingly drifted past the maritime border into Myanmar waters, as the rising tide had pushed their nets farther than expected.

As the fishermen attempted to reel in their nets, a boat carrying seven men, two of whom were armed, approached them. Before they could react, the armed group surrounded them, leaving them no chance to escape.

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EMBARGOES AGAINST RUSSIA

White House
'making plans to ease sanctions'

REUTERS

The United States is drawing up a plan to potentially give Russia sanctions relief as President Donald Trump seeks to restore ties with Moscow and stop the war in Ukraine, a US official and another person familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The White House has asked the State and Treasury departments to draft a list of sanctions that could be eased for US officials to discuss with Russian representatives in the coming days as part of the administration's broad talks with Moscow on improving diplomatic and economic relations, the sources said.

The sanctions offices are now drawing up a proposal

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Firefighters inspect the charred debris inside a building in Gulshan's Shahjadpur area. Four people were killed in the fire that started at a beauty parlour on the first floor of the six-storey building around 12:30pm yesterday. Two fire engines brought the blaze under control around 1:00pm.

PHOTO: STAR

Father cried
for help, yet
son could do
nothing
4 killed in city hotel fire

SHAIHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Monim Jamaddar's phone rang amidst the chaos in front of the hotel in flames. His father Miron's panicked voice on the other end said, "I'm trapped inside. Smoke is everywhere. I can't find a way out."

Monim then asked his father to go to the roof but then the line went dead.

A short while later, firefighters recovered Miron's body from the third floor of Saudia Residential Hotel in Gulshan's Shahjadpur yesterday.

The fire spread through the multi-storey hotel, killing four people, said Monir Hossain, senior station officer of Baridhara Fire Service.

Firefighters recovered a body from a bathroom on the third floor and three others from the fifth floor near the staircase leading to the roof.

"It is assumed that the three victims on the fifth floor tried to reach the roof

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Zika cluster detected in Mohakhali

- Local transmission confirmed in Mohakhali, Dhaka
- First recorded zika-dengue co-infection
- Experts call for nationwide screening



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has detected a cluster of Zika virus cases for the first time, in a worrying development in a country that is already struggling to contain the Aedes mosquito-borne dengue virus.

Although Zika virus infection is rarely fatal in healthy individuals, it poses a significant threat to pregnant women, as it can cause severe fetal complications such as microcephaly, leading to an increased risk of infant mortality and intellectual disability in the infant.

Not only through mosquitoes, the disease can also spread via sexual intercourse, blood transfusion, mother-to-child transmission, and non-sexual physical contact.

As many as five Zika positive patients were identified by icddr,b scientists from 152 samples collected from the capital's Mohakhali area in 2023.

The presence of Zika virus infection in five of these samples suggests that a larger, nationwide screening is necessary to quantify

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SWADHINATA PADAK
Abrar to be awarded posthumously

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abrar Fahad, a student of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology who was brutally murdered in 2019 by members of Chhatra League, will be awarded the Swadhinata Padak 2024, Bangladesh's highest civilian honour.

The recognition honours his courage in standing against injustice and his enduring influence on the nation's fight for justice and freedom of thought and expression.

The news was shared yesterday on a Facebook post by Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain.

In his post, Asif wrote, "A symbol of courage to stand against injustice and an image of free thinking -- Abrar Fahad. The nation will not forget you, Abrar."

Abrar's murder sparked nationwide outrage. His death became a symbol of resistance against oppression.

The Swadhinata Padak is awarded annually by the Bangladesh government to individuals and institutions for outstanding contributions to various fields.



As people rush home to break their fast, the roads become heavily congested, creating long tailbacks. The photo was taken on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Caught between tide and torture

FROM PAGE 1

"We tried to explain that our nets had drifted due to the tide, but they wouldn't listen," Mahmudul said.

He was among the 29 fishermen released by the AA on February 27.

Over the past few months, there has been a noticeable increase in fishermen being abducted by AA. The situation worsened after the fishing ban in the Naf was lifted. The abductions are primarily occurring in three areas of Cox's Bazar: Ukhia, Naikongdia Pook Khal, and Whykong.

Sharing his ordeal with this correspondent, Mahmudul said he and his crew were taken to a rebel-controlled camp on the Myanmar border and placed under strict surveillance. For the next 48 hours, they were confined to a cramped room with no basic amenities.

"We were only given a bucket to urinate in, with no other facilities. They only took us to the washroom upon request and then locked us back in the small room."

"Hours after we were taken, a high-ranking Arakan Army officer interrogated us in fluent Bangla about the deployment of our security forces at the border. They asked about the number of personnel stationed there."

He added, "They hit me when I refused to answer. But we remained silent and did not disclose much information."

Two days later, Mahmudul and his fellow captives were transferred to a prison camp in the hilly areas, where they were held for the next 15 days. "We were only given handful of rice and boiled banana stalks. Sometimes, they gave us lentils, which were rotten or infested with insects. Even the water was contaminated with insects or floating cigarette ends."

According to Mahmudul, at least six other Bangladeshi fishermen were detained in the same camp.

"We begged them to let us contact our families just once so they wouldn't think we were dead. But they refused."

Though he was eventually released, his boat remained in the

AA's custody. "I invested Tk 2 lakh in this new fishing boat, with a loan of Tk 1.65 lakh. We already struggle to repay our debts, and then we have to face such dangers at sea."

According to intelligence sources, at least 23 fishermen with their boats were taken by the AA in the last month from the Naikongdia Pook Khal point, which is just three kilometers away from Shah Porir Dwip.

RANSOM THROUGH MFS

Md Shofullah, another fisherman with two decades of experience, told this newspaper, "We're hearing that two or three fishermen are taken by the AA almost every other day. They wait for the slightest mistake -- if our boat enters their territory even by an inch, they detain us."

He claimed that in most cases, the AA collects a ransom of Tk 1.1-1.5 lakh for each fisherman's release. "They [AA] had Bangladeshi SIM cards and used them to send videos and pictures of torture to family members, demanding ransom. The money was collected through various Mobile Financial Services, which we believe are operated by a group of Cox's Bazar, Ukhia, Naikongdia Pook Khal, and Whykong.

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these efforts.

Lt Col Ashiqur Rahman, commanding officer of the battalion, told The Daily Star, "The AA takes our fishermen whenever they find a boat entering their territory... I believe the AA members on border duty want to prove they are active and seek recognition. The good news is that the AA responds whenever we reach out to them. It may have taken some time, but we managed to bring back the captive fishermen."

Regarding ransom payments through MFS, he said no such information had been confirmed yet. "We have learned that they [AA] demand a sum from the fishermen, which they call a 'penalty' for entering their territory."

Asked about the fishermen being interrogated regarding BGB positions, Lt Col Ashiqur acknowledged "some challenges" at the border. "We are working to overcome these by using different strategies. Our personnel remain vigilant and maintain round-the-clock surveillance to secure the border in coordination with other relevant stakeholders."

He further noted that the incidents began after the Naf River was reopened for fishing. "We need to develop new strategies, including educating fishermen to prevent further occurrences."

On February 13, the government lifted the longstanding ban on fishing in the Naf after seven years and nine months.

Permission to fish in the Naf is subject to several conditions, including a restriction on fishing hours from 8:00am to 4:00pm, the requirement for fishermen to show their identity cards at five designated BGB posts before departure, and compliance with BGB checks upon return.

Only registered fishermen, as per a list provided by the fisheries department, are allowed to fish in the Naf.

The permission is temporary and will be reviewed after three months based on the border situation.

Woman suicide bomber targets Pakistan troops

Kills one soldier

AFP, Quetta

A woman suicide bomber targeted a convoy of Pakistani paramilitary troops in the restive southwestern province of Balochistan yesterday, killing at least one soldier and injuring four others, officials said.

"At least one Frontier Corps (FC) soldier was killed, and four others were injured when a female suicide bomber targeted an FC convoy in Kalat district," a senior administration official Bilal Shabbir told AFP.

Habib Babai, a local police official, also confirmed the toll to AFP.

No group has claimed the attack.

The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) is the most active group in the region and often carries out deadly attacks against security forces or Pakistanis from other provinces.

Women suicide bombers are rare in Pakistan. However, the BLA has previously carried out attacks with women militants.

Three Chinese academics and their Pakistani driver were killed when a woman suicide bomber detonated her device as they were driving into the University of Confucius Institute in April 2022 in Karachi, in the south.

Job losses shock development workers

FROM PAGE 1

NGOs, have long provided employment to thousands and supported critical development initiatives across the country.

Although there is no official data on how many people have lost or may lose their jobs due to the USAID fund cuts, people in the sector estimate the number is between 30,000 and 40,000.

According to diplomatic sources, USAID annually provides between \$300 and \$400 million to Bangladesh in the areas of health, nutrition, agriculture, livelihood, labour rights, prevention of human trafficking, and democratic development.

However, immediately after the inauguration of Donald Trump as US president on January 20, he ordered suspension of USAID funding and activities funded by the agency globally, except for emergency food supplies including that for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

All the American personnel of the USAID office in Bangladesh too have been sent on administrative leave. A section of the personnel are working to send papers to the USAID office in Washington DC.

Some 10,000 contracts between the USAID and NGOs were terminated on February 25 globally, as the Trump administration decided to eliminate more than 90 percent of foreign aid contracts and cut some \$60 billion in funding.

Saiful, who has been working for an education project, said they had thought that Trump would cancel projects related to climate change, gender equality and immunisation as

his policy does not promote these.

"We were preparing the response to the USAID questions on whether our project is aligned to the current US policy and explain the justification of the project, but received the termination letter before we could send the response...," he said.

Another development professional, who was also working for a project related to inclusive finance, said frustration and uncertainty have gripped NGO workers in Bangladesh.

It is going to be a challenging time for them, with the USAID terminating projects and the European countries prioritising security funding amid the Trump administration's less interest in supporting Ukraine's war against Russia.

An official of a health-related project said, "Imagine what happens to the poor people benefiting from the projects related to medical support like vaccination."

Noting the termination of more than 1,000 employees by icddr,b following the US decision, he said USAID has also been supporting projects for some essential medicines and birth control materials, which the for-profit companies do not produce.

Many poor people benefit from livelihood and income generation-related projects, and they will find themselves in trouble all, the official said.

Nazma Akter, executive director at Awaz Foundation, said her organisation had been implementing two US-funded projects, which have been terminated, leaving more than two dozen employees jobless.

"We were working to promote workers' rights, supporting labour-

related cases. The US government has always been speaking high on labour rights, but now it has stopped supporting this. It only means that the employers have more opportunities to exploit workers," she told The Daily Star.

Contacted, NGO Affairs Bureau Director General Anwar Hossain said he has already discussed the issue with a forum of the NGOs that implement USAID-funded projects.

"Joblessness of a significant number of people is indeed a matter of concern. We are asking the NGOs to absorb the jobless people in other projects -- as much as they can do," he told The Daily Star.

Anwar said the bureau was preparing a brief on the impact of the termination of USAID-funded projects for the government.

Several development professionals said the government needs to have a fresh look into how the NGO activities can be implemented.

A health professional said, "The government itself should implement many of the work that NGOs now do with foreign funding, like providing essential birth control materials or immunisation."

Abu Eusuf, professor of development studies at the Dhaka University, said project-based activities are not often sustainable. "The US decision of terminating funding should be an opportunity for the Bangladesh authorities to learn anew and make themselves self-dependent."

"We should prioritise creation of jobs, promotion of business and skill building of our youths for both local and global labour markets," he said.

White House 'making plans to ease sanctions'

FROM PAGE 1

for lifting sanctions on select entities and individuals, including some Russian oligarchs, according to the sources.

So called options papers are often drafted by officials working on sanctions, but the White House's specific request for one in recent days underscores Trump and his advisers' willingness to ease Russian sanctions as part of a potential deal with Moscow.

It was not immediately clear what Washington could specifically seek in return for any sanctions relief.

The White House, the State Department, the Treasury Department and the Russian embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

'PEACE PLAN'

Britain yesterday said that several proposals had been made for a truce in the fighting between Ukraine and Russia after France floated a plan for a one-month pause leading to peace talks, but US President Donald Trump suggested his patience was running out.

European countries, led by Britain and France, are rallying around Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy and trying to hatch a peace plan that includes Kyiv after last week's Oval Office rupture between Zelenskiy and Trump.

"There are clearly a number of options on the table," Prime Minister Keir Starmer's spokesman said.

France, Britain and potentially other European countries have offered to send troops to Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire - something Moscow has already rejected - but say they would want support from the US, or a "backstop".

Trump has reversed US policy by opening talks with Moscow over the head of Ukraine and without consulting its other Western allies. On Friday, he publicly harangued Zelenskiy to fall in line or see the US cut off crucial military aid.

ZIA CHARITABLE GRAFT CASE
SC upholds acquittal of Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday upheld the High Court verdict acquitting BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and two others in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case.

A three-member bench of the Appellate Division, led by Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam, dismissed the leave-to-appeal petitions filed by the state and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) challenging the High Court judgement.

With this order, Khaleda stands acquitted in both the Zia Orphanage Trust and Zia Charitable Trust cases, in which she had previously been convicted and sentenced. Advocate Maksud Ullah, a lawyer for Khaleda Zia, told The Daily Star.

He added that Khaleda is on bail in other cases against her.

Pro-BNP lawyers, including Barrister AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon, Barrister Md Bodruddoza Badal, Advocate Aminul Islam, and Barrister Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal, represented Khaleda Zia, while Additional Attorney General Aneek R Haque and Advocate Ashif Hassan appeared for the state and ACC, respectively, during the hearing.

On November 27 last year, the High Court acquitted Khaleda in the Zia Charitable Trust

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চুক্তি এ রিপোর্ট প্রিয়ের প্রয়োজন নে...

যেকোনো শাখা থেকে রোমটিয়াল গ্রহণ করলেই
পাবেন সরকার নির্ধারিত ২.৫% প্রশংসন

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* শর্ত প্রযোজন



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ঢুলুন

পাই ব্যাংক (PI Banking) -
একটি পুবালী ব্যাংক অ্যাপস

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Polls likely by Dec this year
Says Yunus; EU pledges 68m euro for Rohingya

STAR REPORT

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday reaffirmed the interim government's commitment to holding a free and fair election.

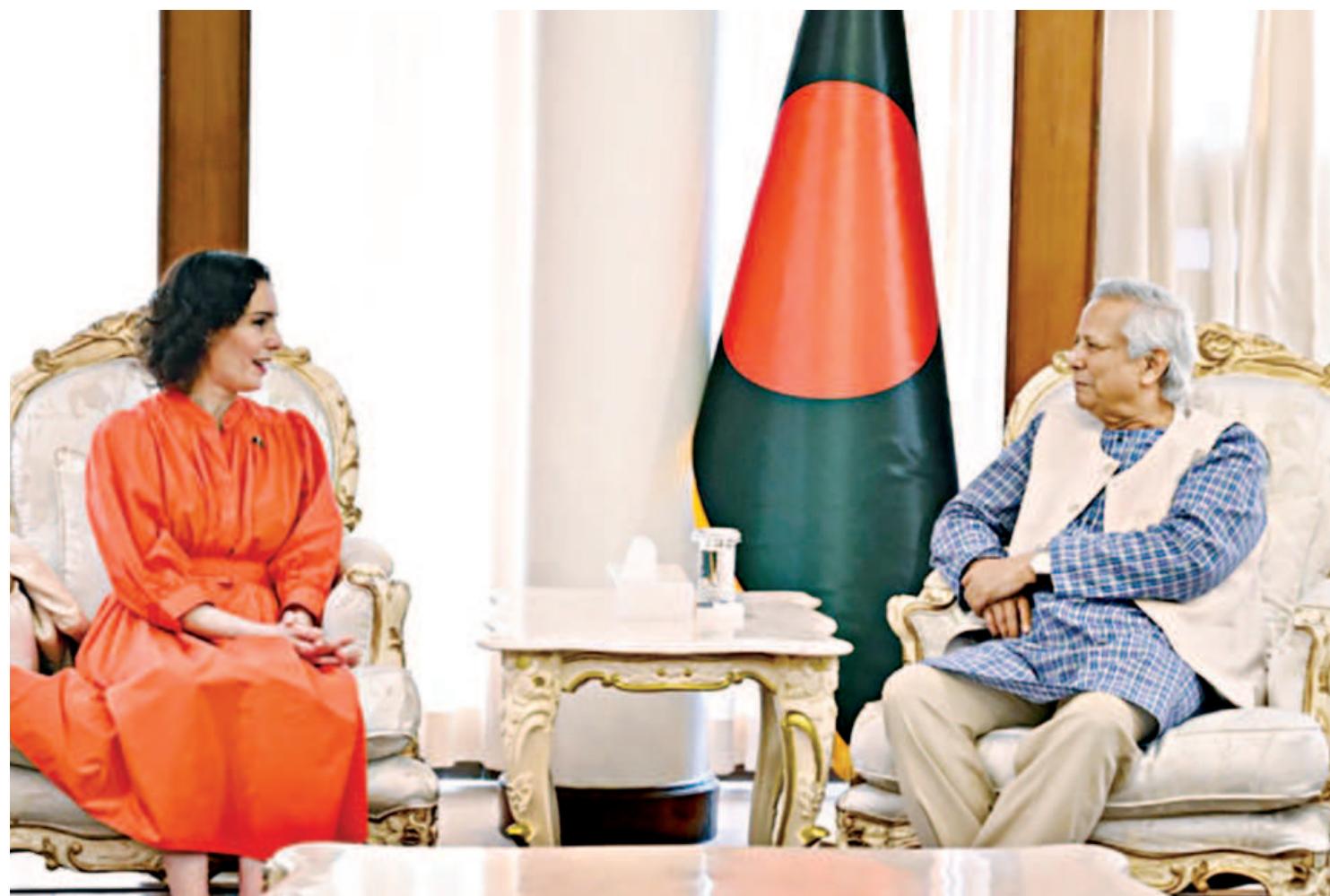
The vote is likely to take place by December this year, he said.

He said this at a meeting with Hadja Lahbib, the EU commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, at the state guest house Jamuna in Dhaka.

At the meeting, Lahbib said the EU will provide 68 million euro this year for the Rohingya response, including support for host communities in Bangladesh and humanitarian aid for those affected by the ongoing conflict in Myanmar's Rakhine state.

Despite the increased funding compared to last year, Lahbib warned

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EU Commissioner Hadja Lahbib at a meeting with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the state guest house Jamuna in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: CA PRESS WING

Rights violations persists in Feb
HRSS monthly report paints grim picture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The human rights situation in February remains disheartening, with numerous violations reported across various sectors, according to the latest monthly report from the Human Rights Support Society, which was released yesterday.

Political violence, mob lynching, harassment of journalists, suppression of freedom of expression, extrajudicial killings, and abuse of women and children were reported throughout the month. Besides, extortion, theft, snatching, robbery, murder, and rape have increased in the month.

The situation worsened centring the controversial statement by former autocrat Sheikh Hasina, which was broadcasted during a virtual event by the banned student organisation Chhatra League. This led to widespread protests by students, resulting in attacks, vandalism, and arson on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence in Dhanmondi, Sheikh Hasina's residence Sudha Sadan, and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

At least 10 people were killed and 13 injured in 17 incidents of mob violence, while 12 accused or convicts died in prison custody.

Tk 10,310cr in assets seized since Aug 5

AL leaders, cronies main targets

DIPAN NANDY

Since the fall of the Awami League government following last year's mass uprising, courts have ordered the seizure and freezing of assets worth Tk 10,310 crore belonging to AL leaders, activists, and beneficiary businessmen across the country.

Additionally, properties and assets worth over Tk 165 crore owned by AL figures abroad have been ordered to be confiscated or frozen, according to the Anti-Corruption Commission's Asset Management Division.

These court orders, issued between August 5 and February 20, followed petitions filed by the ACC.

The most significant action was taken against the S Alam Group, with a substantial amount of assets seized and frozen.

The court ordered the freezing of shares worth Tk 8,672 crore owned by Chairman Saiful Alam, his wife Farzana Parveen, his sons Ahsanul



The court has approved the ACC petitions, leading to the seizure and freezing of a massive amount of illicit wealth, surpassing Tk 10,000 crore.

ACC PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

Alam and Asharaful Alam, and his brothers Mohammad Abdullah Hasan, Osman Gani, Abdus Samad, Rashedul Alam, Sahidul Alam, and Morshedul Alam.

Additionally, immovable properties -- land, flats, and commercial buildings -- worth Tk 200 crore in Gulshan, Dhanmondi, Uttara, and Bashundhara, owned by Saiful Alam and his family, have been seized.

Ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina's former industry and investment adviser Salman F Rahman and his family have had 1,967 decimals of land confiscated.

Former Padma Bank chairman Chowdhury Nafeez Sarafat, his wife, and their son have lost 22 flats across Dhaka's Gulshan, Cantonment, Banani, Baridhara, Bashundhara, Nikunja, Panthapath, and Pallabi, as well as properties in Gazipur and Kaliakair.

Sarafat personally owned

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Army chief off to Central African Republic

UNB, Dhaka
Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman left Dhaka yesterday for Central African Republic on a three-day official visit.

During the visit, he will inspect the activities of the Bangladeshi contingents stationed in the Central African Republic and the Bangladeshi peacekeepers present there, according to a press release from the ISPR.

Besides, the army chief is scheduled to inaugurate a community clinic built by the Bangladesh Army peacekeepers for the service of the local population, it said.

Currently five contingents of the Bangladesh Army are engaged in peacekeeping missions in the Central African Republic.



'Devil Hunt' to continue in focused manner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Operation Devil Hunt" will continue with a more focused approach based on ongoing assessments, Nasimul Ghani, senior secretary to the home ministry, said yesterday.

Speaking to reporters at the Secretariat, he said, "We have been working towards our set targets, reviewing results monthly. If patrolling is ineffective in certain areas, we withdraw and redeploy resources where necessary. Our current focus is on Dhaka city, particularly in tackling petty crimes."

On Sunday, a core committee meeting on law and order was held. A senior ministry official told this newspaper that the chief adviser had objected to the operation's name, prompting discussions on a possible change.

However, Ghani said, "No decision was made in the core committee meeting regarding a name change."

Since February 8, around 12,500 people have been arrested under Operation Devil Hunt, according to government data. No further details were provided following Sunday's meeting.

Ghani said, "I am not denying any figures. I am comparing past and present situations. We inherited a struggling police force, with many officers unfamiliar with Dhaka city. They are now adapting, and we are seeing continuous improvements."

On the recent mob harassment of two women in Lamatia, he said, "Mob actions are not premeditated. Sometimes, an individual triggers an incident. Such occurrences cannot always be anticipated. As a nation, we need more time to mature socially."



To maintain order and ensure a systematic sale of essential goods, buyers who arrived to purchase TCB products were assigned numbers by the truck sale authorities. The photo was taken from the Katabon area in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO PRABIR DAS

43,236 sought asylum in EU last year

Only 4pc accepted, says report on Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A record number of Bangladeshis applied for asylum in the European Union last year, but their acceptance rate remained very low.

According to the latest Asylum Trend 2024 report published by the European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA) yesterday, 43,236 Bangladeshis sought asylum in 2024, up from 40,332 in 2023.

The report did not specify the reasons for the increase, but 2024 was a significant year, which was marked by a mass uprising and violent clashes that left around 1,400 people dead and thousands injured. Italy saw the highest number of Bangladeshi

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Number up from 40,332 applications in 2023

Italy had most Bangladeshi applicants

Applications in Italy rose 43pc to 33,455

France saw a drop in Bangladeshi applications

Greek applications increased from 640 to 1,004

'I quit AL, I am done with politics'
Ex-minister Kamal Majumder tells court

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Kamal Ahmed Majumder, former state minister for industries of the ousted Awami League regime, told a court yesterday that he would no longer engage in politics and that he had renounced his Awami League membership.

Kamal made the remarks as he became emotional before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka. He, along with five others, including top AL leaders and former police chiefs, was produced before the court in connection to a case filed with Kafrel Police Station over a murder that took place during the July uprising.

Kamal approached Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Partha Bhadra after he took his seat.

"I am 76 years old. I don't see very well. I also have diabetes. But the prison authorities are not allowing me to have a device to check my blood sugar levels," Kamal said as he broke down in tears.

"Honourable court, I will no longer engage in politics. I have resigned from the Awami League. Yet, I face a barrage of new cases. At this age, I should be enjoying time with my grandchildren."

The judge said, "Submit all your requests through your lawyer."

Addressing journalists outside the courtroom,

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Bangladesh Football Federation President Tabith Awal hands over a crest during a courtesy call to the Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh, Pranay Verma, yesterday. BFF Vice President Fahad Karim was also present.

PHOTO: BFF

43,236 sought asylum in EU

FROM PAGE 3
Despite the rise in applications, the recognition rate for Bangladeshi asylum seekers remained among the lowest, at approximately four percent, similar to Georgian nationals. The rate aligns with that of the previous years, said the EUA.

In comparison, 90 percent of Syrian asylum applicants and 63 percent of Afghan applicants were granted protection in 2024.

According to the report, more than one million asylum applications were

Rights violations

FROM PAGE 3

various Awami League offices and leaders' homes across the country from February 5 to 7," it added.

The rights body also highlighted the incidents of killings, injuries, and arrests of innocent Bangladeshi at the Indian border.

The HRSS report, prepared based on its own findings and the news published by several media outlets, said at least nine people were killed and 755 people were injured in 104 incidents of political violence, a slight decrease compared to January, when 15 people were killed and 987 people were injured in 124 such incidents.

HRSS said three people were killed in "clashes with law enforcement agencies," including two youths, on February 20 during a joint forces operation in the Chand Udyan area of Mohammadpur in the capital.

The report also said at least 10 people were killed and 13 others injured in 17 incidents of mob violence, while 12 accused or convicts died in prison custody.

The report stated that at least 107 women and female children were tortured in February. Of them, 53, including 38 children, were

raped.

According to HRSS, it is crucial to improve the overall situation through discussions with political parties, civil society, journalists, and student activists to establish the rule of law, democracy, and human rights in the country.

It is needed to ensure the fundamental and constitutional rights of the people by keeping the law and order under control, it added.

RMG workers

FROM PAGE 5

picked up by the police on Sunday night.

Police suspect that the victim's actions were instigated due to problems with the husband, added ASP Wahiduzzaman.

However, workers yesterday started a protest claiming that the factory was responsible for Afsana's death, the police official said.

The workers blocked the highway, set fire to motorcycles, bicycles, and private cars in front of the factory.

The report stated that at least 107 women and female children were tortured in February. Of them, 53, including 38 children, were

Tk 10,310cr in assets seized

FROM PAGE 3

nine flats in Gulshan, Dhaka Cantonment, and Bashundhara, along with a 20-storey building in Gulshan and 43.20 decimals of land in Badda, Nikunja, and Gazipur.

His wife, Anjuman Ara Shahid, owned six flats and 21.25 decimals of land, while their son, Chowdhury Rahib Saifan Sarafat, owned seven flats in Banani and Baridhara.

The court has also ordered the freezing of foreign assets linked to Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan Shah Alam, eight of his family members, and MD Sayem Sobhan Anvir in six countries and two offshore jurisdictions.

Their wealth, allegedly amassed through illicit means, has reportedly been laundered to the UAE, Slovakia, St Kitts and Nevis, Switzerland, the British Virgin Islands, the UK, Singapore, and Cyprus.

According to the

ACC's report, 55 court orders have led to the confiscation of 191.80

acres of land worth Tk 690 crore, 28 houses valued at Tk 44 crore, 38 flats worth Tk 17 crore, 15 plots valued at Tk 8.75 crore, and 23 cars worth Tk 29.32 crore.

Outside Bangladesh, the court has ordered the seizure of assets worth \$8.88 lakh and C86.20 lakh from 23 companies.

Additionally, 54 court orders have frozen 473.95 crore shares worth Tk 8,713.14 crore, alongside 1,030 bank accounts holding Tk 817 crore.

ACC Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam said, "The court has approved the ACC's petitions, leading to the seizure and freezing of a massive amount of illicit wealth, worth over Tk 10,000 crore."

Regarding foreign asset seizures, he added, "The ACC forwards the court orders to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which then coordinates with relevant countries for necessary action."



SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC)
BARC Complex, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh

Vacancy Announcement

SAARC Agriculture Centre is pleased to invite applications from the citizens of Bangladesh for the post of **Project Finance Officer** for the Project on Consortium for Scaling-up Climate Smart Agriculture in South Asia (C-SUCSeS). The applicants fulfilling the requirements of the post may apply to Director, SAC latest by **16th March 2025**. Terms of reference and application form can be downloaded from the website: <http://www.sac.org.bd>.

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Dr. Md. Harunur Rashid
Director, SAC

Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer,
Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE)
e-mail: ee.sylhet@dphe.gov.bd

Date: 03/03/2025

Invitation for e-Tender Notice

Memo no: 46.03.9100.061.07.141.17-238

1	Ministry/Division	Local Government Division
2	Implementation Agency	Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE)
3	Project/program name	1. Need Based Infrastructure Development of Government Primary Schools Project (1st phase) (NBIDGPS-1) 2. Need Based Infrastructure Development of Newly Nationalized Government Primary Schools (1st Phase) (NBIDNNGPS-1)
4	e-Tender IDs & Package	1. 1081692 (WB-GPS-0187) 2. 1081693 (WB-NNGPS-091)
5	Description of works	Construction of remain works of Wash Block in different upazila under DPHE, Sylhet
6	Name, designation & address of official inviting tender	Md Abdul Kashem, Executive Engineer, DPHE, Sylhet Division, Sylhet. Tel: 02-996633011
7	This is online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Interested firm/contractor can see details in the website: www.eprocure.gov.bd	

Md Abdul Kashem
Executive Engineer, DPHE
02-996633011

GD-548

সিলেট গ্যাস ফিল্ডস লিমিটেড

Sylhet Gas Fields Limited
(A Company of Petrobangla)

পাস জাতিক সংস্থা
এর প্রত্যেক ক্ষেত্রে জাতিক
সাহিত্য পালন করুন।

Ref No. 28.20.9153.276.28.549.25

Date: 20-02-2025

e-Tender Notice

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

SI No.	Description of works	Tender ID	Last selling of tender (date & time)	Tender closing & opening (date & time)
01	Rig foundation modification with other ancillary works at Kailashilla Well No. #1 at Kailashilla Gas Field, Golapgonj, Sylhet.	Tender ID: 1078557	05-Mar-2025 15:30 Hours	06-Mar-2025 14:00 Hours

1) This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

2) To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

3) The fees for downloading the e-Tender document from the National e-GP System Portal to be deposited through any registered bank's branch.

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

Engr. Md. Faruque Hossain
General Manager (P&D)
E-mail: gmpnd@sgfl.org.bd

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer
Aditmari, Lalmonirhat.
www.lged.gov.bd

Date: 03/03/2025

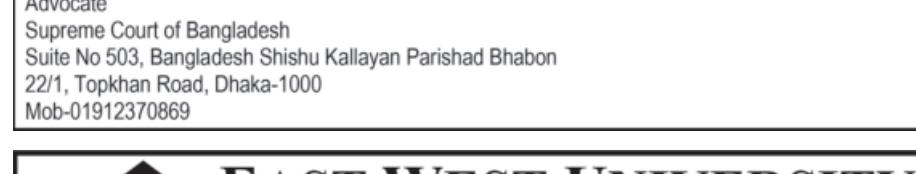
Invitaion e-Tender Notice No- 04/2024-25

e-Tender is Invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the work listed below.

Tender ID.	Package No.	Name of Work	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time	Tendering Method
1081605	e-Tender/PEDP4/LMN /ADI/2024-25/ W20 .654	Repair and Renovation work of Aditmari URC	18 Mar 2025 15.30 PM	19 Mar 2025 15.30 PM	OTM

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

Engr. Md. Faruque Hossain
General Manager (P&D)
E-mail: gmpnd@sgfl.org.bd



EAST WEST UNIVERSITY

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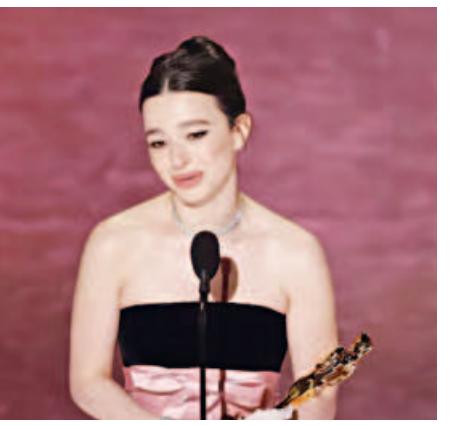
Adrien Brody receiving the Oscar for Best Actor for "The Brutalist".



Director Sean Baker made history with four Oscars in a single night for "Anora".



Zoe Saldana wins the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress for "Emilia Perez".



Mikey Madison wins the Oscar for Best Actress for "Anora".

PHOTOS: REUTERS

OSCARS 2025

A night of historic firsts

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The 97th Academy Awards was a night to remember, marking major milestones in Oscar history. More than just a celebration of cinematic excellence, this year's ceremony highlighted fresh talent, diverse voices, and the evolving landscape of global filmmaking. From Brazil securing its first ever Best International Feature win to Sean Baker making history with four Oscars in a single night, the event was filled with groundbreaking moments.

Whether it was a breakthrough performance, a long-overdue recognition, or a historic win for underrepresented communities, the 97th Oscars reinforced the Academy's growing commitment to inclusivity and change.

The ceremony opened with a performance by *Wicked* stars Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo, setting an electrifying tone for the night.

The biggest winner of the evening was *Anora*, which took home five awards, including a surprise Best Actress win for Mikey Madison. Many had predicted Demi Moore would claim the prize for *The Substance*, making Madison's victory even more unexpected.

Sean Baker made history by winning four major awards in one night—Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, Best Editing, and Best Picture—an unprecedented achievement that cements his reputation as one of the most innovative filmmakers of his generation.

Adrien Brody won Best Actor for *The Brutalist*, portraying László Tóth, a Hungarian-Jewish Holocaust survivor seeking a better life in post-WWII America. This marked a rare achievement—his second Best Actor win from only two nominations, coming two decades after his historic victory for *The Pianist* in 2003, when he became the youngest actor ever to receive the award.

The Best Documentary Feature award went to *No Other Land*, which examines Israel's occupation of the West Bank. The film follows the collaboration between Palestinian activist Basel Adra and Israeli journalist Yuval Abraham as they document forced displacements in Masafer Yatta. During their acceptance speech, Adra called attention to the suffering of his people, while Abraham emphasised the need to stop the

OSCARS 2025 WINNERS LIST

Best Picture

Anora

Best Actor

Adrien Brody (*The Brutalist*)

Best Actress

Mikey Madison (*Anora*)

Best Actor (Supporting Role)

Kieran Culkin (*A Real Pain*)

Best Actress (Supporting Role)

Zoe Saldana (*Emilia Perez*)

Best Director

Sean Baker (*Anora*)

Best International Feature Film

I'm Still Here (Brazil)

Best Cinematography

The *Brutalist*

Best Adapted Screenplay

Conclave

Best Original Screenplay

Anora

Best Live Action Short Film

I'm Not a Robot

Best Animated Short Film

In the Shadow of the Cypress

Best Animated Feature Film

Flow

Best Documentary Short

The Only Girl in the Orchestra

Best Documentary Feature Film

No Other Land

Best Original Song

El Mal (*Emilia Perez*)

Best Original Score

The Brutalist

Best Makeup and Hairstyling

The Substance

Best Costume Design

Wicked

Best Editing

Anora

Best Sound

Dune: Part Two

Best Production Design

Wicked

Best Visual Effects

Dune: Part Two



Basel Adra, Rachel Szor, Hamdan Ballal, and Yuval Abraham pose with the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature Film for "No Other Land".

PHOTOS: REUTERS

destruction in Gaza and free Israeli hostages, highlighting the power of joint Palestinian-Israeli storytelling.

Kieran Culkin won Best Supporting Actor for *A Real Pain*, while Zoe Saldaña received Best Supporting Actress for *Emilia Perez*, making history as the first American of Dominican descent to win an Academy Award.

Brazil also celebrated a historic victory, with *I'm Still Here* winning Best International Feature. The powerful drama, set during the country's military dictatorship, tells the true story of Eunice Paiva's search for her missing husband, exploring themes of grief and resilience.

Latvia made history as well, with *Flow* by Gints Zilbalodis becoming the country's first-ever Oscar-winning film, earning Best Animated Feature. The film's distinctive animation and storytelling captivated audiences worldwide, further establishing Latvian cinema on the global stage.

Several films won multiple awards, including *The Brutalist* (Best Cinematography, Best Original Score, and Best Actor), *Dune: Part Two* (Best Sound and Best Visual Effects), and *Emilia Perez*, which took home Best Original Song for *El Mal*. *The Substance* earned Best Makeup and Hairstyling.

A special segment honoured the legendary Quincy Jones, led by Queen Latifah, Whoopi Goldberg, and Oprah Winfrey. The Los Angeles Master Chorale also delivered a moving performance, adding to the evening's emotional weight. Additionally, a musical tribute to the James Bond franchise featured performances by Doja Cat, BLACKPINK, Lisa, and Raye.

Hollywood mourned the passing of Oscar-winning actor Gene Hackman, who died just days before the ceremony. Morgan Freeman, his co-star in *Under Suspicion* and *Unforgiven*, paid tribute, recalling Hackman's unwavering dedication to his craft.

The In Memoriam segment honoured legendary figures such as Maggie Smith, Kris Kristofferson, Donald Sutherland, David Lynch, and James Earl Jones. However, controversy arose over notable omissions, with fans questioning the absence of Michelle Trachtenberg, Tony Todd, Chance Perdomo, Alain Delon, Tony Roberts, Linda Lavin, Martin Mull, and Olivia Hussey from the tribute.

Prosenjit, Dev to headline SVF & Hoichoi's 2025-26 slate

SVF and Hoichoi have unveiled an expansive 2025-26 content lineup, celebrating SVF's 30-year legacy. The announcement at "Golper Parbon 1432" introduced over 25 productions, spanning web series, films, and new formats.

Leading the theatrical slate are *Vijaynagar'er Hirey*, starring Prosenjit Chatterjee as adventurer Kakababu, and *Raghu Dakat*, a historical epic featuring Dev. Other major films include *Saptadindar Guptadho*, *Chor Police Dakat Babu*, and Sriji Mukherji's *Killbill Society*.



Hoichoi marks its 200th original series milestone with *Anushandhan*, *Naagmonir Rawhoshyo*, and *Tomakei Chayi*. Franchise hits like *Feludar Goyendagiri: Royal Bengal Rawhoshyo* and *The Eken: Benaras e Bibhishika* return.

The company introduced Hoichoi TV+, blending traditional TV with on-demand content. With plans to expand into Bangladesh and Southeast Asia, SVF remains committed to revolutionising Bengali entertainment. "Our ambitions continue to grow," said co-founder Mahendra Soni.

BFDC MD urges legal action over unpaid debts



The Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC) continues to face financial struggles, with unpaid wages triggering protests. New Managing Director Masuma Rahman Tani, appointed on February 23, announced plans to pursue legal action to recover outstanding debts from production companies. These companies, which used BFDC resources on credit, have failed to repay substantial amounts, despite repeated notices. Tani expressed frustration over the situation, noting that legal action would be a last resort if polite requests were unsuccessful.

Tani also addressed protests against her leadership, emphasising her commitment to reform and improving BFDC operations. Initiatives such as reducing rental fees for shooting floors have already seen positive results, with increased production activity.

A DREAM COME TRUE

Rupanty Akid makes Hindi film debut



ZAHID AKBAR

Hindi Vindi, a joint production between India and Australia, was released in Australia on February 27. The film, directed by Ali Sayed, features Bangladeshi-origin actress Rupanty Akid. After the film's release, Rupanty was praised for her portrayal of Rihanna.

The plot explores intergenerational language barriers within the immigrant community. The audience who attended the premiere show of *Hindi Vindi*, saw the success of Rupanty as their own achievement as the Bangladeshi community in Australia.

The actress told The Daily Star, "It feels like a dream come true. Sydney theatre has helped me reach this far. I would definitely want to become a part of Bangladeshi, Bollywood, or even Hollywood projects, however, the role has to be good."



Regarding getting connected with the team of *Hindi Vindi*, she adds, "They were looking for someone to portray Rihanna, who could speak with an Australian accent and also speak broken Hindi. When I learned about the audition that was going on, I

applied and gave several screen tests online. Afterwards, I was called for a live audition, and I finally got the role."

The actress mentions that since childhood, she has known many Bangladeshi stars personally. However, her favourites are Deepa Khandaker and Tarin Jahan.

Rupanty Akid made her acting debut as a child artiste in the drama *Angti*, directed by Sagar Jahan in 2013. She was also featured in Mahfuz Ahmed's *Keboi Raat Hoye Jay and Hello Bangladesh*.

Last year, she received widespread recognition for her role in Shihab Shaheen's web film *Kacher Manhush Durey Thuiya*. The actress will be seen in Masud Hasan Ujjal's upcoming film, *Bonolota Sen*.

Born to Bangladeshi parents in Australia, Rupanty grew up there. Alongside Rupanty, *Hindi Vindi* also features Neena Gupta, Mihir Ahuja, and Australian singer Guy Sebastian, among others.



PHOTOS: COURTESY

INTERNATIONAL

UN rights chief laments 'shift in direction' in United States

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights chief yesterday voiced deep concern over the United States' "fundamental shift" in direction since Donald Trump returned to power, and decried the "unchecked power" of "unelected tech oligarchs".

Addressing the United Nations Human Rights Council, Volker Turk voiced his strongest rebuke to date of the dramatic about-face seen in the United States in recent weeks.

"We have enjoyed bipartisan support from the United States of America on human rights over many decades," he said, before adding: "I am now deeply worried by the fundamental shift in direction that is taking place domestically and internationally."

Without naming Trump, he decried that "policies intended to protect people from discrimination are now labelled as discriminatory".

"Progress is being rolled back on



gender equality. Disinformation, intimidation and threats, notably against journalists and public officials, risk undermining the work of independent media and the functioning of institutions."

Turk also lamented that "divisive rhetoric is being used to distort, deceive and polarise".

"This is generating fear and anxiety among many," he warned. "On these issues and more, my office will continue building on our long history of constructive engagement."

Since returning to the White House on January 20, Trump has signed a whopping 79 executive orders touching on issues from foreign policy to transgender rights.

Crime rate has not gone up

FROM PAGE 12

"My first effort was to unearth the real picture from beneath the rubble and make people's daily lives easier. That was my initial focus. Then gradually, I started thinking about the future -- where we should be heading."

His priority was institutional reforms to prevent a repeat of past "fascist" rule, corruption and electoral malpractices.

"From the ruins where we started, a new shape is emerging. We have made the economy more accessible and we have gained trust both domestically and internationally. No one can question whether we have failed to earn the trust of any country."

About his government's plan for institutional reforms, he said a "July Charter" would compile agreed-upon points between political parties regarding necessary changes.

"The political parties only need to specify their positions. Based on that, we will determine which recommendations have consensus. Those will be compiled into a



Firefighters work at the site of an apartment building hit by a Russian drone strike in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Sunday night. Ukrainian officials also reported an unspecified number of fatalities from a Russian missile strike on a military training ground.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Israel worked to 'collapse' Gaza deal

Says Hamas; Israeli fire kills 2 Palestinians in the enclave

AGENCIES

Palestinian group Hamas yesterday accused Israel of working to "collapse" a ceasefire agreement for Gaza and evade a continuation of the truce amid an impasse over its implementation.

"Violations of the agreement during the first phase prove beyond a doubt the (Israeli) occupation government was interested in the collapse of the agreement and worked hard to achieve that," senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan said in a video statement.

Meanwhile, Israeli fire killed at least two people in Rafah and

injured three others in Khan Younis in the south of Gaza, raising fear among Palestinians that the ceasefire could collapse altogether after Israel imposed a total blockade on the shattered enclave.

Gaza stores emptied and price of sack of flour more than doubles

Two Israeli government officials said mediators had asked Israel for a few more days to resolve the standoff.

Israel raised the stakes on Sunday by imposing a total blockade on all supplies, including food and fuel, to sustain 2.3 million Gaza people living among the ruins after the 15-month conflict.

Hundreds of lorries carrying supplies were backed up in Egypt, denied permission to enter. Gaza residents said shops had been swiftly emptied of all supplies and the price of a sack of flour had more than doubled overnight.

"Where will our food come from?" said Salah al-Hajj Hassan, a resident in Jabalia, where families returned to destroyed homes to live in the rubble.

GERMAN CITY Two dead, several hurt as car hits crowd

AFP, Berlin

A car driven into a crowd in the German city of Mannheim yesterday killed two persons and injured several, police said, adding that one person had been arrested.

"We can now confirm

that a car was driven

into a pedestrian zone

and that two persons

were killed," said a

police spokesman. "We

can confirm that one

suspect was arrested,"

he said, adding that

"the investigation is

continuing."

Of big wins and bigger surprises

FROM PAGE 12

wins at the Critics' Choice, Screen Actors' Guild, and Golden Globe awards, it was Madison's performance in "Anora" that stunned the crowd and took home the coveted golden statue. Moore was left empty-handed, making Madison's win one of the most talked-about moments of the night.

Another historic achievement occurred when Sean Baker won an unprecedented four major awards in a single evening -- Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, Best Editing, and Best Picture.

This groundbreaking feat solidified Baker's place as one of the most innovative filmmakers of his generation.

'Ensure safety or step down'

FROM PAGE 12

to no action taken against perpetrators.

They specifically condemned the inaction against local extortionist Rinku, reportedly affiliated with the Juba League, who allegedly incited the Lalmatia mob incident.

The protesters carried placards with slogans such as "Stop Slut-Shaming!" "Law for Women, But Where is the Law for Men?" and "Ensure Safety or Step Down!"

Addressing the crowd, Adrita Roy, a student of Jahangirnagar University, said, "Two days ago, two female students were attacked by a mob in Lalmatia. Even after the formation of the interim government and changing the home affairs

Can the NCP succeed in building an inclusive Bangladesh?

Rubayat Khan
is volunteer op ed editor at Muktipotro.

RUBAYAT KHAN

For a nation whose political landscape has been dominated by two major parties for decades, the announcement of the National Citizen Party (NCP)—led by student heroes of the July uprising—marks a watershed moment in Bangladesh's history. The media attention, public turnout, and palpable energy surrounding this launch suggest that this is not just another political outfit destined for obscurity; it could potentially be a third major political force in the country that could fundamentally alter our political trajectory for decades to come.

Indeed, as I watched the celebrations from thousands of kilometres away, the energy was unmistakable. The heroes of what is now being called the "Monsoon Revolution" have captured the imagination of an entire generation—particularly Gen Z and Millennial voters, some of whom will likely cast their ballots for the first time in the upcoming national election.

What struck me most about the launch was its festive, almost celebratory atmosphere—a stark contrast to the typically combative tone of Bangladeshi political gatherings. The welcoming of leaders from diverse political backgrounds (with the deliberate exclusion of Awami League aligned parties) sent a clear message: this is a new brand of politics that will be more civil and collegial.

Even more significant was the conscious display of religious inclusivity. Recitations from both the Quran and Bhagavad Gita on the same stage represented a powerful symbolic rejection of the identity politics that the

Awami League had weaponised during its reign of more than 15 years, and a nostalgic throwback to our childhood years, when every school morning started with the anthem and recitations from multiple religious texts. I would like to believe this was not mere tokenism but a declaration of intent—that Bangladesh's future must be built on unity rather than division, on shared citizenship rather than religious or ethnic fragmentation.

In the weeks leading up to this announcement, the rumour mill had

marks the beginning of our struggle for a Second Republic" framed the movement not merely as opposition to the previous regime but as a positive project to reimagine the very foundations of our nation.

The concept of a Second Republic carries profound historical weight. In the US, the civil war transformed the nation into what historians often call a "Second American Republic"—one where slavery was abolished, citizenship was redefined, and federal power was expanded. Similarly, France has

Bangladesh since independence. The promise that "corruption and nepotism will have no place in our politics" will resonate deeply with a population that has watched helplessly as the fruits of our economic growth have been concentrated in the hands of political elites and their cronies.

Most heartening was the NCP's commitment to protecting Bangladesh's ethnic, social, gender, religious, and cultural diversity. This stands in stark contrast to movements in other countries,

They now carry the stain of association with an increasingly ineffective interim government that has struggled to deliver on its promises. For the NCP to succeed, it must consciously shed this baggage and establish a distinct identity separate from the interim government's shortcomings. They must candidly acknowledge these missteps—not as failures of character, but as lessons in political strategy.

Any such attempts will inevitably be combated by established political forces. The Awami League—along with its allies—clearly views these student leaders as sworn enemies and will likely deploy every tool in its vast war chest to undermine them. The BNP, which stands to lose the most if this new party gains momentum, may fight tooth and nail for every inch of political space. Local mobilisation in every constituency, requiring networks and on-the-ground foot soldiers so far enjoyed only by the largest parties, will be a huge challenge to overcome. Fundraising to sustain the electoral effort without resorting to the usual cronyism and extortion tactics of old is yet another challenge.

However, internal cohesion may perhaps end up being the greatest single challenge. Politics in Bangladesh has a long history of fragmentation in parties lacking a singular, cult-like leadership figure, such as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman or Ziaur Rahman. The diverse backgrounds and ideologies represented within the NCP could become fault lines under pressure, especially when facing ruling party oppression or attempts to buy loyalty.

Only time will tell whether the NCP can withstand these tests. However, if they can remain faithful to their founding philosophy—fighting for equity and justice, championing the cause of ordinary citizens, practising internal democracy, and maintaining a zero tolerance policy towards corruption—they may well attain political power sooner than many expect. Their stated vision of a Second Republic—one where power truly flows from the people, where institutions serve citizens rather than ruling parties, where economic growth benefits all, and where Bangladesh's rich diversity is celebrated rather than weaponised—should resonate powerfully with a population that has grown weary of false promises from the political establishment.

We stand at a critical juncture in our nation's history. The sacrifices made during the July uprising have created an opening for fundamental change. The NCP's ability to translate this moment into a lasting movement will depend on their moral superiority and political acumen first and foremost, but also on whether the majority of ordinary citizens embrace and sustain their vision of a more just, inclusive, and democratic Bangladesh.



Nahid Islam, convener of the newly formed National Citizen Party (NCP), delivers a speech with top leaders present on stage during the launch of the party on February 28, 2025.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

been working overtime. Would this be a fundamentalist wolf in the progressive sheep's clothing? Would the movement fragment along ideological lines? Would women be marginalised in the leadership structure?

The launch effectively dispelled many of these concerns. The inclusion of three prominent women in the top leadership, including Dr Tasnim Jara—a well-respected Oxford-trained health professional and social media influencer—demonstrated a commitment to gender representation that goes beyond mere lip service. The coexistence of leaders from various ideological backgrounds, including Nasiruddin Patwary and Akhter Hossain (who were rumoured to be at loggerheads), suggested an ability to bridge differences in service of a greater cause.

Perhaps most heartening was the philosophical vision articulated by NCP Convener Nahid Islam in his inaugural address. His declaration that "July 2024

traversed through five distinct republics, each marking a fundamental reimagining of the state following moments of crisis. Bangladesh now stands at such a crossroads. Fifty-four years after our independence, this call for a Second Republic represents the culmination of decades of unfulfilled promises and institutional degradation. The wheels of history turn slowly; the original republic, born in the blood of 1971, perhaps needed these five decades to completely exhaust its possibilities. The Monsoon Revolution has given us this rare opening—a constitutional moment where the fundamental rules governing our society can be rewritten.

Nahid's emphasis on drafting a new democratic constitution through an elected constituent assembly is, therefore, particularly significant. His rejection of familial dynasties in favour of merit-based leadership represents a direct challenge to the political culture that has dominated

where popular revolutions or uprisings have often been followed by takeovers by fundamentalists.

But let us harbour no illusions. The path ahead for the NCP will be fraught with challenges. They said they wanted to build a country free from discrimination and committed to inclusivity. However, there have been many instances of discrimination against members of minority communities, women, and people from vulnerable groups. In quite a few instances, no one from the students' party or the anti-discrimination students' movement platform spoke out in their support.

The decision by several student leaders to join Prof Muhammad Yunus's interim government has proven to be a strategic miscalculation that now weighs heavily on the NCP. In the seven tumultuous months since July, these student "advisers" have become convenient scapegoats for the interim administration's failures.

UN report and the continuing struggles of July victims

Cyrus Naji is researcher at Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST). Advocate Priya Ahsan Chowdhury is consultant at BLAST. Zaineeb Kareem is intern at BLAST.

CYRUS NAJI, PRIYA AHSAN CHOWDHURY and ZAINEEB KAREEM

"I used to be beautiful," said Parvin, a 27-year-old brickbreaker, who came to the Dhaka headquarters of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) one evening last week to share her story. She was wearing dark glasses, even though it was night, because she had just undergone a surgery on her left eye, which had been wounded by bullets.

One day, during her usual walk to work, she found herself surrounded by chaos. Minutes later, a police officer opened fire on her, riddling the left side of her body with bullets, several of which hit her left eye. She was rushed to the hospital by some students, and while she was able to receive urgent care, she lost the ability to see through her left eye.

Like thousands of others who took part in the July movement, Parvin has paid a heavy price. Along with her sight, she has lost months of income, having to relocate out of Dhaka with no way to support her family, pay for her treatment, or cook daily meals. Parvin's brother has had to go to work, missing out on his own education. And it has taken a personal toll. "It's hard to believe the country has been liberated; it doesn't feel that way. I can't sleep. I can't forget what I saw," she told us.

Unlike many others, however, Parvin has started to see the light at the end of the tunnel with a successful corneal transplant, which has begun to restore vision in her eye.

Parvin is one of the 12 victims whom BLAST interviewed for a submission to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Fact-Finding Mission on Bangladesh, which published its report earlier in February.

That report has established, on a reasonable grounds basis, the previous government's culpability for killing "as many as 1,400 people" and injuring "thousands more," as well as obstructing medical aid to those injured. It is a crucial confirmation

of the narrative of the July uprising and its lasting effects: the report noted that "many victims and their families are in precarious positions as a result" of their injuries. Moreover, although the interim government has announced that the victims will receive free treatment, "the implementation of this decision has reportedly encountered problems."

We believed it was important that the UN report highlighted the plight of those injured in the movement, so, in October, we decided to make our own submission to the fact-finding mission, focused on the injured people—what they have suffered and how their needs are still not being met.

Consequently, BLAST collaborated with a volunteer lawyers' group to document the plight of injured people and provide medical and legal referrals. Many were still waiting for urgent treatment, which we tried to facilitate while documenting the circumstances in which they were attacked.

The team settled on 12 individuals to interview, initially prioritising those with severe eye injuries requiring urgent attention, including three minors. Five of them were

bystanders, while seven were protesters, including students, private sector employees, and informal sector workers. It was a drop in the ocean of the number of injured people, but allowed us to produce case studies

included fractured nasal bones, retinal damage, and multiple gunshot wounds to the face and body. One victim is already completely blind, and another is at risk of losing his sight soon.



Victims of the July uprising undergoing treatment at a hospital in Dhaka.

treatment, inadequate treatment, and police harassment. He has lost vision in both eyes.

All the victims that BLAST interviewed have faced considerable financial difficulties as a result of their injuries. Some, who used to work to support their families, are now physically disabled and financially devastated.

As the team listened to their stories, we referred them to government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for practical support, including urgent medical treatment or much-needed financial aid. A variety of government and non-governmental organisations, volunteer groups, and private individuals have stepped up; they have helped with financial aid or securing second medical opinions and, in one case, a cornea. We were also able to provide victims with a free hotline number, through an NGO, for mental health support, although more is needed to alleviate their severe trauma.

And, from the government side, the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation (JSSF) has undertaken the initiative to provide up to Tk 1 lakh to each injured person (and Tk 5 lakh to the families of those killed). BLAST also engaged with the JSSF to help the money reach the victims without delay. However, despite the good intentions of the government and the JSSF, there is a glaring lack of coordination. Moreover, in most cases, Tk 1 lakh is far from enough, as the victims have lost their livelihoods.

However, accessing medical treatment is far from straightforward for many injured individuals. Despite the government's assurance of free treatment for injured protesters, some have had to pay for their treatment or medication, as these are often not available for free outside Dhaka. In other cases, the victims simply did not know how to access free treatment.

BLAST coordinated these medical referrals for that initial group of 12, but it was clear that many more were in the same position. These needs, far from being resolved, are becoming more pressing as time passes. Consequently, we have since expanded our project to a much larger group of victims.

In some cases, after being shot by law enforcement, victims were unable to access treatment, which increased the severity of their injuries. Some were denied treatment by hospitals under instructions to turn away protesters. Others found the available treatment inadequate and had to find other options themselves.

illustrating the victims' ongoing needs. BLAST's findings painted a bleak picture: A 15-year-old girl was coming back from school on July 17 when she was shot. She now has 60 bullets lodged in her body and is blind in one eye. On July 19, a 13-year-old boy was returning from Friday prayers when he was shot above his right knee. He is an underage garment worker and has spent his own money on treatment, but it is unlikely he will fully recover.

All the survivors interviewed sustained severe injuries; in most cases, they had eye trauma from rubber pellet wounds, which scatter on impact—a highly specialised and time-sensitive issue to address. The injuries

in some cases, after being shot by law enforcement, victims were unable to access treatment, which increased the severity of their injuries. Some were denied treatment by hospitals under instructions to turn away protesters. Others found the available treatment inadequate and had to find other options themselves. Two were arrested after being injured.

One case, in particular, shows the combination of chaos and cruelty that reigned during the protests. After being shot in the face in Merul Badda, this survivor found a local hospital ill-equipped to treat him, so he travelled several hours by rickshaw to a larger hospital, where he faced denial of

INSIDE UBER'S OPERATIONS IN BANGLADESH

A chat with Nashid Ferdous Kamal

Since its launch in Bangladesh in 2016, the global ride-sharing platform Uber has significantly influenced the country's mobility landscape. A recently unveiled report, compiled by UK-based research firm Public First, highlighted Uber's overall contribution of BDT 5,500 crore to the country's economy last year.

ZARIF FAIAZ

The Daily Star sat down with Nashid Ferdous Kamal, Country Head, Uber Bangladesh, and Amy Price, Director - Head of Tech, Media and Telecoms Practice at Public First, to discuss Uber's economic and social impact, responses to safety challenges and debates facing the gig economy, and the future of ride-sharing in Bangladesh.

THE DAILY STAR (DS): Uber recently launched an economic impact report in Bangladesh. Can you share some key highlights from the report?

AMY PRICE: We were really excited to take on this project because it's important to assess not only the consumer benefits of Uber but also its broader economic impact. The report estimates that Uber contributed BDT 55 billion to the Bangladeshi economy in a single year.

DS: What's next in this transformation journey? Are there plans to introduce new services like Uber Bus, which has been launched in many other cities around the world?

NASHID: Innovation remains at our core. Right now, our priority is strengthening our existing services and expanding into more cities beyond Dhaka.

We have introduced multiple ride categories to cater to different consumer needs, and our next steps involve enhancing the customer experience and scaling our operations. Bringing in new services like Uber Bus is something we're always evaluating, but our current focus is on improving reliability and safety.

DS: Many users have raised safety concerns about Uber rides these days, with reports of drivers behaving inappropriately. How does Uber

Uber?

NASHID: It depends on the situation. If a security issue or a serious incident occurs, then yes, we provide relevant data to assist authorities. But in general, our role is to balance safety, privacy, and compliance with legal

be classified as employees or independent contractors. Do you see this debate happening in Bangladesh?

NASHID: The gig economy thrives on flexibility. Our drivers are free to choose when and how much they want to work, which wouldn't be possible if they were employees with fixed shifts.

Rather than focusing on classification, I think the bigger discussion should be on improving working conditions and benefits for gig workers, ensuring they get the best possible earnings and protections while maintaining their independence.

DS: In Bangladesh, competition in ride-sharing is still relatively low. How does Uber prevent monopolistic practices?

NASHID: We encourage healthy competition because it benefits the entire ecosystem—riders get better services, and drivers have more opportunities. The ride-sharing industry is still growing, and we welcome more players to drive innovation and service quality.

DS: Cash payments remain dominant in Bangladesh, even though Uber supports digital transactions. Do you have plans to shift towards cashless payments?

NASHID: Digital payments are an important focus, but adoption has been slow because many drivers aren't comfortable with the adjustment process. We're working on solutions to make digital transactions easier and more accessible for them.

DS: The report mentions that 89% of riders feel that Uber is the safest way to travel home. Is there similar data for drivers?

AMY: While we didn't ask that exact question in our survey, we did find that over 60% of drivers prefer driving through Uber over street hailing. They see benefits in terms of security, reliability, and steady earnings.

NASHID: Also, the safety features that protect riders—like GPS tracking and trip insurance—apply to drivers as well. Unlike offline rides, where neither party is covered, Uber ensures that both riders and drivers are protected in case of an incident.

DS: Despite Uber's efforts, we still see many drivers engaging in street hailing, bypassing the app. How does Uber address this issue?

NASHID: We actively discourage offline rides because they compromise security for both riders and drivers. When trips are tracked on the app, there's a record of the ride, the fare is transparent, and both parties are protected.

We conduct training and awareness programs for drivers to highlight the risks of offline trips. But addressing this issue requires a collaborative effort—from drivers, riders, and policymakers alike.

DS: Speaking of safety, does Uber collaborate with authorities to share data for security purposes?

NASHID: Yes, we do. If law enforcement or regulatory bodies request information, we comply within legal and regulatory frameworks. However, we don't share data indiscriminately. Each request is evaluated, and we only provide relevant information as required by law.

DS: Do government agencies frequently request data from

NASHID: Absolutely. Bangladesh is a unique market in many ways. The pace of digital transformation, the high population density, and evolving regulatory policies create both challenges and opportunities.

What excites me is the sheer potential—Bangladesh is embracing ride-sharing at an incredible rate, and we want to keep building on that momentum.

DS: Thank you for giving time to our readers.

NASHID: Thank you.



Amy Price, Director - Head of Tech, Media and Telecoms Practice at Public First



Nashid Ferdous Kamal, Country Head, Uber Bangladesh

It's important to clarify that this is not Uber's profit—it's the combined direct and indirect economic impact of Uber's operations. The platform creates a ripple effect, benefiting earners, consumers, and businesses across various sectors.

DS: That's a significant figure. Can you elaborate your take on how Uber is "transforming travel" as mentioned in the report?

NASHID FERDOUS KAMAL: Mobility has completely transformed since Uber entered the market. It has made transportation more accessible, affordable, and reliable. Just imagine Dhaka without Uber—most of us have already forgotten what that was like.

This report quantifies what we already feel—Uber saves time, creates employment, and contributes to the economy in ways that go beyond just ride-sharing. If people save time, they can be more productive. If drivers earn more, they spend more, stimulating economic activity.

ensure rider safety?

NASHID: Safety is a top priority for Uber. Our app has several built-in safety features, including GPS tracking, emergency buttons, and trip sharing options that allow riders to share their location with family and friends.

Additionally, we have a dedicated team that investigates complaints. If an issue is flagged, we immediately contact the rider and driver and take appropriate action, including suspensions or bans if necessary.

DS: Speaking of safety, does Uber collaborate with authorities to share data for security purposes?

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DS: Do government agencies frequently request data from

NASHID: Uber drivers are independent partners, not employees, so we don't mandate formal training. However, we regularly communicate guidelines, safety measures, and community standards to ensure they understand the best practices.

DS: In some global markets, Uber has faced legal challenges over whether drivers should

NASHID: Absolutely. Bangladesh is a unique market in many ways. The pace of digital transformation, the high population density, and evolving regulatory policies create both challenges and opportunities.

What excites me is the sheer potential—Bangladesh is embracing ride-sharing at an incredible rate, and we want to keep building on that momentum.

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NASHID: Thank you.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC.



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• Bachelor's degree in any discipline, with prior experience in manufacturing (light engineering and heavy industry), electronic equipment/home appliances, group of companies, etc.

Minimum experience: 2-5 years

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Eligibility:

• BSc (Hons.) in Computer Science/Engineering from any reputed university.

Minimum experience: 3 years

Optimizely



Senior Product Manager

Deadline: N/A

Eligibility:

• Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience, with prior product experience or equivalent skills.

Minimum experience: 5 years

act:onaid

ActionAid Bangladesh

Associate Officer, People & Culture (Operations)

Deadline: March 4

Eligibility:

• Bachelor's degree in Human Resources, Public Administration, or a related field. Postgraduate Diploma in Human Resource Management (PGDHRM) is advantageous.

Minimum experience: 2 years

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



"I have always believed that if you want to achieve anything special in life you have to work, work, and then work some more."

DAVID BECKHAM

How to stay productive at work while fasting

SHARTAJ AZIZ HOSSAIN

Fasting during Ramadan for spiritual reasons is a deeply rewarding experience, but it can also be challenging when balancing a full day of work. Between low energy, dehydration, and an unpredictable sleep schedule, staying focused and productive can feel like an uphill battle. However, with some smart strategies, you can manage your workload effectively without burning out.

One of the best ways to maintain productivity while fasting is to plan your workday around your energy levels. Right after Sehri, the morning time is when you are likely to feel the most refreshed and alert. This is the ideal time to tackle the most important and mentally demanding tasks. As the day progresses and fatigue starts setting in, save routine or easier tasks for the afternoon.

Using a planner or a to-do list can help you stay on track without overwhelming yourself. Working smarter, not harder, is key during this time. Focusing on priority tasks first helps avoid last-minute stress, and breaking big projects into smaller, manageable steps can make them feel less daunting. Whenever possible, automating repetitive tasks or delegating work to others can lighten your workload and prevent exhaustion.

Leveraging technology can also make a huge difference in managing your energy throughout the day. Productivity tools like Notion, Asana, or Google Calendar can help keep your tasks organised, while automation apps like Zapier or Microsoft Power

Automate can handle repetitive work for you. AI-powered assistants like ChatGPT can be useful for quick research, drafting emails, or summarising information efficiently. Additionally, opting for video calls instead of in-person meetings can help conserve energy.

"By planning meals wisely, staying active, and optimising sleep, professionals can maintain their focus and efficiency even while fasting," says Farhana Preeti, AVP of Business Development at Shajgoj Limited. According to her, a well-balanced Sehri, rich in protein, fibre, and complex carbohydrates, provides sustained energy, while proper hydration between Iftar and Sehri is essential for overall well-being. She also advises against consuming sugary or fried foods, as they can lead to sluggishness and reduced focus.

Taking breaks and allowing yourself to recharge is just as important as managing your workload. Short breaks can be used to stretch, take a quick walk, or practice breathing exercises. The Pomodoro technique—working for 25 minutes and then taking a 5-minute break—can help maintain productivity while preventing burnout. If your workplace allows, a quick power nap of 15-20 minutes can be incredibly refreshing.

Optimising your workspace and using smart productivity hacks can further enhance focus. Keeping your desk clutter-free minimises distractions, while apps like Forest or Brain.fm can create an environment conducive to concentration. Pre-written email templates can save time on routine



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

communications, allowing you to work more efficiently.

Ayman Sadiq, CEO of 10 Minute School, shared his tips for staying productive during Ramadan: "Adjust your desk and chair height for better posture and position your laptop and mouse ergonomically to avoid strain. And most importantly, no multitasking—focus on deep work to maximise efficiency."

Handling meetings and communication wisely is another crucial aspect of maintaining productivity while fasting. Reminding yourself of the spiritual purpose behind fasting helps reinforce discipline and patience. Practising

gratitude can improve your mindset, and celebrating small wins—like completing tasks on time despite fasting—will keep you motivated.

For those dealing with traffic jams during their commute, planning ahead can reduce stress. If remote work or flexible hours are an option, they can help avoid unnecessary travel fatigue. Keeping water and light snacks handy in case you're stuck in traffic at Iftar time is a practical solution, and using navigation apps to plan your route can help you avoid heavily congested areas.

Many professionals who fast say that adjusting their sleep schedule is key to staying productive. Some prefer handling complex tasks in the morning and leaving creative work for the evening when they feel more relaxed. Health experts also recommend light physical activity, such as short walks, to keep blood circulation going. Experienced professionals advise setting realistic daily goals and avoiding an overloaded schedule—fasting is a time for balance, not burnout.

At the end of the day, fasting and work can go hand in hand with the right approach. By staying organised, working smart, and taking care of your health, you can navigate your workday efficiently without feeling overwhelmed. The key is to pace yourself, stay mindful of your energy levels, and remember that you don't have to do everything simultaneously. Work smart, not hard, and you'll end your day feeling accomplished.

India brace for 'nervy times' AGAINST AUSTRALIA

India and Australia have faced each other 151 times in ODIs, with Australia leading the rivalry with 84 wins compared to India's 57 victories, while 10 matches ended with no result.

The last two times India and Australia met in a major knockout match, Australia won, clinching both the World Test Championship final and the ODI World Cup final in 2023. The last time the two teams faced each other in ODIs was also in that final.

India have a 2-1 record over Australia in the Champions Trophy, having won in 1998 and 2000; the Men in Blue lost in 2006 at home, and the 2009 encounter between the sides ended in a no result.

AGENCIES

Rohit Sharma warned his India team Monday to expect "fightbacks" and "nervy times" against Australia in the Champions Trophy last four in a rematch of the 2023 ODI World Cup final.

Blessed with a venue advantage and with a depleted Australia at their disposal, India will be gunning for revenge when the familiar foes clash in the first semifinal today.

While most Group A teams shuttled between two of the three venues in Pakistan and flew to Dubai for their match against India, Rohit Sharma and his men have been spared any travel hassle.

By staying put in one venue, they have gained valuable insights into the vastly different conditions in Dubai, where spinners have dominated typically low-scoring matches.

With an injury-ravaged Australia fielding a depleted side, India sense an opportunity to settle a score against an opponent who beat them in the finals of the World Test Championship and the 50-overs

World Cup - both in 2023.

In absence of Australia's frontline quicks, including regular skipper Pat Cummins, stop-gap captain Steve Smith will be banking on his second-string pace attack to make early inroads in India's batting lineup.

India's four-pronged spin



unit claiming nine of the 10 New Zealand wickets on Sunday while successfully defending 249-9 was a fair indication of the turn on offer in Dubai.

While Smith and Marnus Labuschagne are known for

their spin proficiency, Australia will also count on the firepower that Josh Inglis provides in the middle order.

India will also be sick of the sight of their familiar nemesis Travis Head.

Head smashed match-winning hundreds against them in both the finals of the ICC events two years ago and the opener seems to have regained his form just in time.

"Look, it is a great opposition to play against. All we have to do is what we have been thinking about the last three games and we have to approach that game in a similar fashion," said Rohit Sharma.

"We understand the opposition and how they play and stuff like that. Look, Australia have been such a great team over the years. So we will expect some fightbacks, we will expect some nervy times as well in the middle," he added.

"But that is how the game is being played these days. And you are talking about a semi-final."



BCB delays approval of new central contracts

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) held a board meeting yesterday, with central contracts topping the agenda. The board is in the process of redesigning the contracts, reintroducing a grade system that had been used in the past.

While last year's central contracts were announced in early February, there was some confusion this time, specifically due to the board's pending decision on veterans Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad.

"Yes, one of the reasons for the lateness was the two seniors. We need to understand their plans, and that has to be discussed," a BCB source close to the development told The Daily Star.

Following the board meeting, BCB director and cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim was asked if there is any plan of action regarding both seniors, especially if they are in consideration for the 2024 ODI World Cup.

"They have to prove themselves. Considering their age and performances, it's not my call actually, but the selectors," Fahim told reporters in a press conference.

The board is also working to improve the contracts of players who only play Test cricket, with the grade system expected to better the terms of their contracts.

In addition, BCB plans to extend the contracts of national team head coach Phil Simmons and senior assistant coach Mohammad Salahuddin, whose initial contracts were until the Champions Trophy. If a deal with Simmons cannot be reached before the upcoming Zimbabwe series, Salahuddin is set to take over as head coach, sources said.

BCB is also seeking new bowling coaches, and should favourable options arise, pace-bowling coach Andre Adams may move to a different role within the board.

Meanwhile, BCB officials yesterday informed that the independent investigation committee has been thoroughly going through incidents, paperwork, and conducting interviews to probe into match-fixing allegations in the Bangladesh Premier League. With no deadline set, the committee is still investigating, and BCB sources informed that the report may be due soon.

Real's 'fantastic four' face Atletico test

AGENCIES

Real Madrid's galaxy of attacking stars initially struggled to gel this season, but coach Carlo Ancelotti kept faith and now the "fantastic four" are Los Blancos' greatest strength as they face rivals Atletico Madrid in the Champions League.

They host Diego Simeone's Atletico side

international Bellingham in the first leg after his booking in the play-off round against Manchester City triggered a suspension for three yellow cards.

Ancelotti has solved tactical problems throughout his storied career. Last season he replaced forward Karim Benzema with Bellingham, a central midfielder, to great effect. Real Madrid claimed a Champions

Madrid's fantastic four have taken flight at just the right time. Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone admitted city rivals Real have the more illustrious history but backed his own team to deliver.

Atletico are battling with Spain's big two for the La Liga title and are currently second, one point behind Barca and two ahead of Los Blancos.



on Tuesday at the Santiago Bernabeu in the last 16 first leg, with the return at the Metropolitano stadium across town on March 12.

French superstar Kylian Mbappe joined last season's trident of Jude Bellingham, Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo Goes and both the former Paris Saint-Germain striker and Madrid's squad needed time to adapt to the change.

Madrid must cope without England

League and La Liga double, but it has taken time to click with Mbappe.

Madrid's struggles forced them into the new play-off round, where they faced English champions Man City. Finally firing on all cylinders, the holders hit six goals over the two legs.

Mbappe and Bellingham scored at City and Vinicius was named man of the match. Mbappe then netted a brilliant hat-trick at home to seal a 6-3 aggregate victory.

Real hold a significant upper hand against their city rivals in knockout stages of the European Cup/Champions League, including finals, as the Los Blancos have emerged victorious in all five of their show-downs in this stage, with the most recent coming in the 2016-17 season.

However Atletico have won the last two European fixtures between the sides – a 2-1 triumph in the semifinal second leg back in 2016-17 and a 4-2 win in the 2018 Super Cup.

Gulshan, Agrani stun DPL heavyweights

SPORTS REPORTER

Both newly-promoted clubs Gulshan Cricket Club and Agrani Bank Cricket Club created a stir in the opening day's fixtures of the Dhaka Premier League, beating grand opponents Mohammadan and Abahani respectively.

At BKSP Ground 3, Gulshan's Zawad Abrar and Iftekhar Hossain Ifti took on the challenge of facing the likes of Mohammad Saifuddin, Ebadot Hossain, Nasum Ahmed and Taijul Islam to put 298 on the board. Zawad hit 75 at the top while Ifti struck a 110-ball 108, laced with nine fours and three sixes, to bolster the Gulshan side. Abu Haider Rony picked up four wickets for Mohammadan. Liton Das, who had signed for Gulshan, did not appear in the game.

Tamim Iqbal-led Mohammadan did not have the best of starts as both openers – Tamim and Rony Talukdar – fell cheaply. Mushfiqur Rahim

and Mahmudullah Riyad could not recover from their Champions Trophy slump and made seven and 10 respectively. Centurion Ifti later picked up three wickets while Ariful Islam's 73 saw Mohammadan reach 191 all out, losing by 107 runs.

At Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Najmul Hossain Shanto's bat was still waiting to smile, out after a cumbersome 51-ball 20. In the end Abahani reached 234 all out, through Mosaddek Hossain's 65-ball 73 and Parvez Hossain Emon's 50 at the top. Imrul Kayes's 94 and Amite Hasan's unbeaten 44 saw Agrani Bank cruise to a six-wicket win in 45 overs.

At BKSP's Ground 4, Prime Bank beat Rupganj Tigers by three wickets, courtesy of an 83-ball unbeaten 98 from Shamim Hossain Patwary. Rupganj posted 216 all out earlier, with Arafat Sunny and Nahidul Islam bagging three wickets each for Prime Bank.



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Dated: 24.02.2025

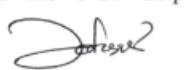
e-Tender Notice

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted on the National e-GP Portal System (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tenders, please register on the e-GP System Portal. e-Tender has been invited on e-GP System Portal by Office of Chief Engineer, University of Chittagong, Chittagong for procurement of following.

SL. No.	e-Tender ID & Package No.	Package description
01	ID-1075746, CE-e-GP(OTM)-126/CUCE-2623- IMSF/2024-25	OTM-126/CUCE-2623-IMSF/2024-25 Supplying & Installation for 400X200 mm dia Deep Tubewell & Pipe Line Work at Institute of Marine Science & Fisheries, University of Chittagong

e-Tender details can be downloaded from as stated above on e-GP System Portal for purpose. The fees for downloading e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal should be deposited online through any registered bank. The e-Tenders will be accepted on the e-GP System Portal within the specified date and time. Accepted tenders will be opened as per the date and time displayed online.

More information and guidance is available at the National e-GP Portal System and the e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


Engr. Syed Zahangir Fazal
Chief Engineer (I/C)
University of Chittagong
Chittagong, Bangladesh



Villagers beat two suspected robbers dead Suspects shoot, injure 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two suspected robbers were beaten to death by villagers during an attempted robbery in Satkania upazila of Chattogram last night.

The identities of the deceased could not be known immediately.

Five people were hit by bullets as the "robbers" opened fire while trying to flee, police said.

The incident took place between 9:00pm and 10:00pm in the Chankhola area under Eochia union, Satkania Police Station. Inspector (Investigation) Sudipto Reza told The Daily Star.

Several armed robbers arrived at a house in a CNG-run auto-rickshaw during prayers in the mosque. The villagers noticed them and started to chase them. At one point, the robbers fired at villagers while trying to escape.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 6



Damaged and brand new local currency notes on display on the pavement in Gulistan yesterday. People can exchange their torn and worn out notes with new ones by paying commissions depending on the type of damage. The traders then exchange the damaged notes from the central bank.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

UN REPORT ON UPRISING It's crucial for due process Says Volker Türk at Human Rights Council

UNB, Dhaka

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk yesterday hoped that their recent independent fact-finding report will support truth-telling, accountability, reparations, healing and reform in Bangladesh.

"It will be crucial to ensure due process in criminal cases and investigate revenge violence, including against

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5

\$29M USAID FUNDING Foreign ministry refutes Trump's claim

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US President Donald Trump's allegation that USAID provided \$29 million to an organisation owned by two persons in Bangladesh is not true, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

Such projects are executed under the Development Objective Assistance Agreement (DOAG) between Bangladesh and the US, ensuring no individual

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

6,531 pry teachers get their jobs back

SC stays HC verdict, allows edn dept
to appeal against HC rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday stayed the High Court verdict that scrapped a government decision to grant appointment letters to 6,531 candidates qualified for the post of assistant teachers at government primary schools.

The apex court also allowed the primary education department to move an appeal before this court challenging the HC judgement.

A three-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam delivered the order following a leave to appeal petition filed by the state against the HC verdict.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



Protesters burn the effigy of Home Affairs Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury near the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday demanding that he be removed.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

CRIME, MORAL POLICING 'Ensure safety or step down' Protesters burn effigy of home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protesters burned an effigy of Home Affairs Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday, demanding his removal from office over his failure to curb crime.

They accused him of incompetence as incidents of murder, rape, repression, mob violence, and moral policing continue to rise across the country.

The demonstration, organised by Bangladesh Against Rape and Abuse, took place at Lalmatia, Asadgat, featuring women from various sectors.

It followed a recent mob attack on two women in Lalmatia, which sparked widespread public outrage.

Protesters argued that despite repeated outrages, the law-and-order situation is deteriorating, with little

Mob gouges out eyes of a suspected thief

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A mob has gouged out the eyes and severed a thumb of a suspected thief in Nazrulnagar union of Char Fesson in Bholia.

Police rescued the victim and admitted him to Char Fesson Upazila Health Complex after being informed by a guard in Char Arkalmi village on Sunday, said Ershadul Haque Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Dakshin Aicha Police Station.

The injured man, 40-year-old Shahjahan Mintiz, also known as Mintiz Farazi, is a resident of ward No. 4 of the union.

Bholia Superintendent of Police Md Shariful Haque said Mintiz has a criminal record. He was arrested in November last year but was out on bail.

"I've heard that he was caught for stealing," Shariful said.

A physician at Char Fesson Upazila Health Complex's emergency department described the victim's injuries as horrifying.

"The patient has both his eyes gouged out and his right thumb severed. Additionally, he sustained a major injury to his right leg. Given the severity of his condition, we provided initial treatment and advised the family to transfer him to Dhaka for advanced care," the doctor said.

OC Ershadul said police would take necessary legal action if a formal complaint were filed.

Tk 10,310cr in assets seized since Aug 5

P3

Prime Bank



PRAYER
TIMING
MARCH 4

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-03 12-45 4-30 6-03 7-30

JAMAAT 5-13 1-15 4-45 6-18 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN MARCH SEHRI IFTAR

3 4 6:03

4 5 5:01 6:04

5 6 5:00 6:04

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টিমিবি'র মাঝে ব্যবসা করুন

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Crime rate has not gone up

Election by this year, Yunus
tells BBC Bangla

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The crime rate in Bangladesh has not increased after the interim government took charge on August 8 last year, said Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

In an interview with BBC Bangla that was published yesterday, he questioned the basis of claims that the crime rate has soared.

"What is your reference point for saying crime has increased? You need to clarify that. Crime rates have not increased at all -- they remain the same as before."

Police reports, meantime, indicate a 50 percent rise in robbery cases over the past six months.

Yunus, however, acknowledged that the police force initially struggled to function due to fear but is gradually regaining its ability to enforce law and order.

When he took charge, Yunus said, he found the country in ruins, with institutions in disarray.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



THE OSCARS

Of big wins and bigger surprises

A&E DESK

The 97th Academy Awards were filled with unforgettable moments that had audiences on the edge of their seats.

From unexpected victories to shocking snubs, the 2025 Oscars were anything but ordinary, featuring major surprises and noteworthy milestones that will be remembered for years to come.

"Emilia Pérez", despite leading the



SEE PAGE 7 COL 6