



## 8 individuals likely to get Swadhinata Padak

**Badruddin Umar declines award**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering eight individuals for the Swadhinata Padak 2025 (Independence Award), the highest civilian honour, in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the country.

The Cabinet Division will soon announce the official list, a senior government source told The Daily Star yesterday.

The individuals under consideration include the commander-in-chief of the Liberation War General MAG Osmani; eminent scientist professor Jamal Nazrul Islam; BRAC founder Sir Fazle Hasan Abed; researcher, writer, and intellectual Badruddin Umar; poet Al Mahmud; pop legend Azam Khan; renowned sculptor Novera Ahmed, who is one of the key designers of the Central Shaheed Minar; and Abrar

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THE WILD & WISE



**A flock of greylag geese gliding across the waters of Tanguar Haor in Sunamganj's Tahirpur upazila. This majestic waterfowl, widespread across Europe and Asia, is often considered the wild ancestor of domesticated geese. Recognisable by its large size, orange-pink bill and delicately patterned grey-brown plumage, greylags breed in wetlands, lakes and marshes, often nesting in reed beds or on small islands. In Bangladesh, they are rare but have been spotted in Tanguar and Hakaluki haors, arriving from Siberia and Central Asia during winter. Unlike many geese, greylags form strong pair bonds, often staying with one mate for life. They are also highly intelligent -- not only do they recognise family members after long migrations, but they also remember human faces and interactions!**

PHOTO: MOSABBER HOSSAIN

## Polls between December and next March

Yunus tells BBC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus in an interview with BBC published yesterday said the election would be held between December 2025 and March next year, depending on how quickly the government could institute reforms necessary for free and fair elections.

"If reforms can be done as quickly as we wish, then December would be the time that we would hold elections. If you have a longer version of reforms, then we may need a few more months," he said.

During the interview, Yunus admitted feeling "dazzled" when asked to assume leadership following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina.

He stressed that law and order, alongside economic recovery, remain his government's top priorities.

"It is a shattered economy, a devastated economy," he said.

"It feels as if a tornado has hit for the last 16 years, and we are picking up the pieces."

About law and order, Yunus claimed the situation has improved since last year's violent protests. However, many in Dhaka argue that security has not been fully restored.

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## CONSENSUS COMMISSION Parties asked to give opinions on reforms

Spreadsheet handed to them with March 13 as deadline

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Consensus Commission has sent a letter to political parties, seeking their opinions on key recommendations made by six reform commissions.

The parties have been requested to submit their feedback in a spreadsheet attached to the letter by March 13.

After receiving their responses, the commission will sit with each political party separately, Prof Ali Riaz, vice-chairman of the National Consensus Commission, told The Daily Star last night.

The letter signed by Prof Riaz contains a tabular format summary of the key recommendations of the six reform commissions, according to sources.

The parties have been asked to provide feedback on two aspects for each recommendation.

The first aspect is whether they agree with the recommendation.

They have been given three options: "Agree", "Disagree", and "Partially Agree". Each party must select one of these options to express their stance.

The second aspect is their opinion on the timeline and method of implementation of each recommendation.

There are six options to choose from: implementation through an ordinance before election, implementation through a referendum before election, implementation through a referendum during the election,

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DU INCIDENT

## Man accused of harassment granted bail

Victim gets threats after personal details released on social media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mostafa Asif Arnob, a 25-year-old bookbinder at the DU library, who was arrested for harassing a female student in public, was released on bail yesterday, hours after being taken into custody.

Early yesterday, a group of people identifying themselves as "Tawhidi Janata" besieged the capital's Shahbagh Police Station for around eight hours from 1:00am, demanding his release.

Toufique Hasan, sub-inspector at the police station and the investigation officer in the case, presented Arnob before a Dhaka court with a forwarding report in the morning. Metropolitan Magistrate Mehra Mahbub subsequently ordered his release on bail.

According to the forwarding report, the complainant had submitted an application to the station's officer-in-charge, requesting the withdrawal of the case. In the application, she also stated that she had no objection to Arnob's bail and that he had already apologised, the investigation officer said.

However, legal experts have pointed out that once a case is registered at a police station, there is no legal

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## Indian credits to be downsized

Revision comes due to slow project implementation

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The three Indian lines of credit (LoCs) amounting to about \$7.4 billion are set to be downsized as many of the projects are riddled with different types of complexities that have slowed down their progress.

The decision came yesterday on the last day of the two-day India-Bangladesh bilateral meeting to review the Indian-funded projects.

A joint technical committee will be formed to work on finalising the fate of the projects and the funding.

"I would not call it downsizing -- I would rather say that the LoCs would be right-sized and rationalised," said a top official of the Economic Relations Division, the finance ministry wing that deals with foreign loans.

Asked about the reasons for the delay in the projects, the official said, "Some were delayed because of our faults and some for their fault."

As a result, the meeting has decided to cut short the funds.

After further discussions, it will be decided by how much the LoCs will be rationalised and which projects would get the chop.

No contracts were signed between the two countries for at least 22 projects involving \$4 billion.

Those projects will be reviewed, the ERD official said, adding that the opinions will be sought from the projects' line ministries.

It was also agreed in the meeting that future projects would not be lumped under the LoCs; those will be taken care of on a standalone basis.

The Indian side has reassured that the interest rate on the loans under LoCs will remain at 1 percent, the ERD official added.

**No contracts were signed between Bangladesh and India for at least 22 projects involving \$4 billion.**

Of the three LoCs signed since 2010, only \$1.88 billion has been disbursed so far and Bangladesh has repaid \$254 million as of June last year.

The first LoC, worth \$862 million for 15 projects, was signed in 2010. The second worth \$2 billion for 12 projects was signed in March 2016.

In October 2017, the third credit deal, amounting to \$4.5 billion, was

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## Let EC keep NID services under its jurisdiction

CEC urges govt

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin said he would "strongly urge" the government to keep the National Identity services under the Election Commission's jurisdiction.

His remark comes amidst a government initiative to consolidate civic services, including birth registration and national identity registration services, under a single entity -- "Civil Registration Commission".

"We will strongly voice our opinions in the law-making process. Wherever opinions are needed, we will give [our opinions]. The entire commission is in agreement," the CEC told reporters at the EC headquarters in the capital.

The CEC's statement followed a protest by EC staff who were against the potential transfer of NID operations. They issued a seven-day ultimatum, threatening further action if no progress is made by March 12.

Nasir Uddin clarified that while discussions are ongoing, he believes the government has not finalised the transfer.

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## EU leaders pledge to stand by Zelensky

Vow to spend more on defence after US military aid freeze for Ukraine

REUTERS, Brussels

European leaders yesterday said they would stand by Ukraine and spend more on defence in a world upended by Donald Trump's reversal of US policies.

"Europe must take up this challenge, this arms race. And it must win it," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said as he arrived at the summit in Brussels.

"Europe as a whole is truly capable of winning any military, financial, economic confrontation with Russia -- we are simply stronger," Tusk said.

Many EU leaders hailed the European Commission's proposals this week to give them fiscal flexibility on defence spending, and to jointly borrow up to 150 billion euros (\$160 billion) to lend to EU governments to spend on their militaries.

"We are here to defend Ukraine," the chairman of the meeting Antonio Costa said as he and European Commission Chief Ursula von der Leyen, both smiling broadly, warmly welcomed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, in sharp contrast with the clash between Trump and Zelensky in the Oval Office last week.

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PHOTO: AFP

**Relatives and friends of Ukrainian prisoners of war hold placards during a demonstration in front of the US embassy in Kyiv, Ukraine, yesterday to bring attention to the fate of Ukrainian prisoners of war and ensure their inclusion in any deal to stop the conflict with Russia.**

When power shifts but patterns remain

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PRAYER TIMING					
MARCH 7					
Fajr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN 5:00	12:30	4:30	6:05	7:30	
JAMAAT 5:10	1:15	4:45	6:20	8:00	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					
SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING					
RAMADAN	MARCH	SEHRI	IFTAR		
6	7			6:05	
7	8	4:58	6:05		
8	9	4:57	6:06		