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## LAUNDERED BILLIONS

# Govt fast-tracks recovery efforts

Special law in the works; 11 priority cases involving Hasina, Saifuzzaman, among others, identified

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government is set to enact a special law aimed at streamlining the recovery process of money laundered during the Sheikh Hasina regime.

The special law, which would be formulated within one week, would provide a legal framework for retrieving the money, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said at a press conference yesterday.

It is being framed to address the demands of various foreign entities and organisations assisting the government in retrieving the laundered funds.

"Bringing back laundered money is a lengthy process and involves many legal issues. It is extremely crucial for us to recover this money. We are hopeful that we will be able to recover several billion dollars in assets by the end of this year if we can make sufficient progress."

The comments came after Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus chaired a meeting with a high-powered inter-agency taskforce formed to bring back money that has been illegally taken abroad.

Yunus called for expediting efforts to bring back billions in stolen money -- both from the banking system and other means.

"It is the top priority of the government. We want to bring the stolen money back at any cost. The chief adviser has emphasised the importance of acting swiftly and ensuring that not a single day is wasted in this effort," Shafiqul said, quoting Yunus.

The task force has identified 11 priority cases involving ousted prime minister Hasina, her family members, organisations connected to them, and former land minister and Awami League leader Saifuzzaman Chowdhury.

The names of all individuals involved in the 11 cases were not disclosed for the sake of investigation.

"The number one priority case is the involvement of money laundering by Sheikh Hasina, her family and connected organisations," Shafiqul said.

The joint investigation team has traced assets linked to Hasina, her family, and their associated individuals and organisations in the US, the UK, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and the Cayman Islands, he said.

"A Russian slush fund [a reserve of money used for illicit purposes, especially political bribery] has been identified in a Malaysian bank," he

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### ASSET RECOVERY PLAN FOR 2025

#### QUARTER 1

- Meetings with UK bodies to request sanctions
- Attend asset recovery seminar in London
- Finalise draft TOR for international law firms/funders

#### QUARTER 2

- Engage law firms
- Push for freezes on Bangladeshi assets abroad
- Settlement process to begin

#### QUARTER 3

- Start international criminal and civil cases
- Litigation funders to engage law firms and investigators
- Call for UN and US sanctions

#### QUARTER 4

- Achieve settlements in at least 50% of 11 priority cases
- Asset freezes in 11 cases
- Establish an asset recovery agency



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Garment workers blocked airport road in the capital's Chairmanbari after a truck ran over and killed a female worker and injured another yesterday morning. The blockade lasted for several hours, causing traffic chaos across the city. Story on page 3.

**8-yr-old rape victim still on life support**  
**CMH forms medical board**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The eight-year-old rape victim from Magura, who is undergoing treatment at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka, moved her eyelids for the first time yesterday morning.

However, doctors said her overall condition has improved only slightly, Chief Adviser's Deputy Press Secretary Mohammad Abul Kalam Azad Mazumdar said at a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital last afternoon.

The CMH formed a high-level medical board for her treatment as she remained on life support at the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU), the Inter-Services Public Relations Directorate (ISPR) said in a statement.

The board includes

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### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

## Protests rage on streets, online

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students across the country took to the streets for the third day in a row yesterday, demanding justice for victims of sexual violence, stricter punishment for offenders, and the resignation of the home affairs adviser.

The protests erupted after the rape of an 8-year-old girl, who is now fighting for her life, sparking outrage nationwide.

Demonstrations were held at universities and key locations, with students blocking roads and forming human chains to press home their demands.

Protesters called for swift legal action, with some demanding special tribunals to ensure faster trials for rape cases.

Many students boycotted classes and took to social media, posting blindfolded photos in solidarity with victims.

In Dhaka, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (Marxist) held a demonstration at Raju Sculpture.

Protesters criticised the government's failure to curb

sexual violence and condemned the adviser's dismissive remarks on recent harassment cases. They also denounced the culture of impunity that allows perpetrators to escape justice.



As part of their nationwide programme, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leaders and activists formed a human chain in front of the High Court.

Addressing the event, JCD President Rakibul Islam Rakib expressed concerns over the increasing incidents of rape, online harassment, and violence against women, as well as the deteriorating law and order situation and the lack of justice for victims of

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**EC starts process to register new political parties**

**Reaffirms polls in December**

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and AHMED DEEPTO

The Election Commission, reaffirming that the next parliamentary polls will be held in December, yesterday initiated the registration process for new political parties.

The commission took the initiative without making any changes to the process, although the Electoral Reform Commission had proposed modifications.

The EC's work on updating the voter roll is going on in full swing and is expected to be completed by June. The commission has also taken steps to amend the existing law on demarcation of constituencies. The EC is also working to revise the guidelines for local and national observers, said top officials.

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin said they did not want to miss the December deadline, as announced by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad.

"We are making necessary preparations to ensure the timeline is maintained," the CEC told reporters after a meeting with British High

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**TÜRK INTERVIEW**  
**Army says it wasn't directly contacted by UN**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Army has responded to recent remarks made by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, clarifying that it was not directly contacted regarding the concerns he raised in an interview with he BBC's HARDtalk.

In a statement issued yesterday, the army said any concerns the UN rights body had were conveyed to the previous government, not the military leadership.

"Please note that the Bangladesh Army did not receive any direct communication or intent from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the matter stated by Mr Türk. If any such concerns were raised, they were conveyed to the erstwhile Government of Bangladesh and not directly to the

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Topsoil has been dug out from the bank of the Surma for making bricks. Ignoring a ban, a group of people are involved in this illegal activity. This not only ruins the fertility of the land, but also increases the likelihood of river erosion. The photo was taken in the Mirerchak area in Sylhet city yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

**CONSENSUS COMMISSION**  
**It's prepping for talks with parties**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Consensus Commission is preparing to hold discussions with political parties to quickly reach an agreement on formulating a "National Charter".

Its Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz revealed this at a press conference at the LD Hall of the parliament yesterday.

Responding to a question, he said constitutional amendments are possible through ordinances as it has been done in the past.

Prof Riaz said the commission has sought opinions from 34 political parties and alliances on 166 important reform recommendations.

The commission expects to receive the responses by March 13. Once the parties submit their opinions, talks will begin, even though specific dates have not yet been set.

Prof Riaz urged political parties and alliances to provide their opinions as quickly as possible.

"The next steps in this process depend on the political parties. We want to start the discussions quickly..."

Commission members Badiul Alam Majumdar, Iftekharuzzaman, Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, Safar Raj Hossain, Emdadul Haque, and Chief Adviser's Special Assistant (Consensus) Monir Haider were present at the press conference.

The six reform commissions, formed in October last year, submitted their proposals to the government on February 8.

The consensus commission is now trying to build consensus on the reform proposals.

Prof Riaz said key recommendations of five

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