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TO KNOW

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Revenue
Tk 52,000cr
short of IMF's
Jul-Dec target
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Balochistan
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Giving people
power beyond
the ballot box
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Atletico 'still
alive' in Real
battle
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THE DISAPPEARED OF THE JULY UPRISING ■ PART 1

Hastily buried in unmarked graves

Seven months after the July uprising in Bangladesh, many protesters still remain missing. We investigated 31 cases: six were buried as unclaimed bodies at Rayerbazar graveyard; four were identified by families from among the charred bodies in Ashulia; two were handed over to families after DNA testing; and 19 are still unaccounted for. We found evidence of systematic government efforts to cover up medical records and bodies of the victims so they can never be found again. This four-part series also documents how families were denied time to collect the corpses from hospital morgues, and how they are now waiting for the bodies of their loved ones.

MASIFIQ MIZAN, KEERO ADHNAN AHMED and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

On July 18, 2024, two days after Abu Sayed's killing in Rangpur, Sohel Rana stepped out of his home in Dhaka's Jatrabari around 6:00pm to join the quota reform movement. He told his mother he would be back soon, but he never did.

Around an hour after he joined the protest in Jatrabari area, police detained Sohel, 28, tortured him, and then shot him several times, four fellow protesters and a person who admitted him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital told

him when he was crossing Uttara to get a bus. He then vanished.

The same day in Uttara, Md Assadullah, a driver and a father of two, was shot by Awami League-affiliated helmeted assailants, according to CCTV camera footage and multiple still images verified by The Daily Star.

Sohel, Faisal and Assadullah never knew each other in life. But their fates converged in death.

Their bodies, along with many others, ended up at Dhaka Medical College morgue. Unidentified, unclaimed.

A nationwide curfew, intended to quash the movement, kept their families from finding them,



In Block 4 of Rayerbazar graveyard lie many unidentified victims of the July atrocities.

The Daily Star. His inquest report, prepared by Shahbagh police, confirms he had multiple pellet wounds on both sides of his chest and bruises on different parts of his body.

Faisal Sarker, 18, a college student who also worked as a supervisor of a bus company, left home for work at Abdullapur bus stand in Uttara on July 19. By the time he got out, the crackdown on the streets was getting worse.

He called his mother to tell her that he was coming home, in Cumilla, to stay with her until the situation stabilised. His family last heard of

and the six were hurriedly buried in unmarked graves at Rayerbazar before their relatives could collect their bodies, an investigation by The Daily Star has found.

Meanwhile, at least 19 more families we spoke to continue searching for their fathers, sons, brothers or husbands whom they lost during the July uprising. But they don't know if they will ever find them as there are hardly any efforts from the government to resolve the mystery of these missing men.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Police and anti rape protesters clashed when the latter tried to break a police barricade and submit a memorandum to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at his residence. Several individuals from both sides were injured in the incident that occurred around 3:30pm in front of the InterContinental hotel.

The protesters' demands include removal of the home adviser for what they say is his failure to ensure women's safety and maintain law and order.

The demonstrators, under the banner of Bangladesh against rape and oppression, marched from Dhaka University to the intersection in front of the hotel, and as they tried to break a police barricade, the cops and the protesters shoved each other and some engaged in fistfights.

At one stage, police used batons, witnesses said.

Several policemen and women protesters were injured, they added.

Adrita Roy, one of the protesters, said, "We were peacefully protesting, but the police attacked us, including the women. Women were at the forefront of our march."

Even male police members assaulted female protesters, she added.

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WASIM BIN HABIB and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Muhammad Yunus has announced that the next national election is planned for either December this year or mid-next year. How optimistic are you about the announcement?

Salahuddin Ahmed: During our last meeting with the chief adviser, where we discussed various matters, he assured us that preparations are underway to hold the elections by December. We are quite optimistic that he will present a detailed roadmap to the nation, specifying when and how he plans to conduct the elections within that time frame.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
Protest march
foiled by police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Star INTERVIEW

There's no need for constituent assembly

People, govt to decide whether AL should be banned, says Salahuddin



WASIM BIN HABIB and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

It has been seven months since the interim government took office. During this time, the caretaker administration has been working to revive the political process and strengthen state institutions. Meanwhile, participants in the July uprising have floated a new political party.

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The Daily Star: Chief Adviser Prof

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

ASSETS OF HASINA, FAMILY, AL Court orders to freeze Tk 600cr

Sudha Sadan, 3 flats among properties to be confiscated

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and DIPAN NANDY

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the confiscation of Sudha Sadan, a property registered to Sheikh Hasina's children, and immovable assets of Sheikh Rehana and Radwan Mujib Siddiq.

The court also ordered the freezing of 124 bank accounts associated with Sheikh Hasina, her son Sajib Wazed Joy, her daughter Saima Wazed Putul, her sister Sheikh Rehana, the Bangladesh Awami League, the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust, and several other entities.

There is at least Tk 600 crore in these bank accounts.

Judge Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order yesterday after ACC Deputy Director Monirul Islam, who is leading a team of investigators, submitted an application for the order.

Monirul wrote in the application that the order was needed because Hasina and the others were trying to transfer the money from these accounts.

The court also issued travel bans on Hasina, Rehana, Joy, Putul, and Rehana's children Radwan Mujib Siddiq, Bobby, Tulip Rizwana Siddiq, and Azmina Siddiq Ruponti.

SEIZED PROPERTIES
According to ACC documents, Sudha Sadan is built on 16 katha (1.65 decimals to each katha) of land in Dhanmondi purchased by Sheikh Hasina's late husband, Wazed Miah. The property is registered to Joy and Putul.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



A brick kiln in Charfesson, Bhola, has been built on farmland. The owners source clay from the topsoil of neighbouring fields and burn wood to run the kiln, both harmful to the environment and illegal.

PHOTO: MONIR UDDIN ANIK



Celebrating a life devoted to Bangladesh

Prof Rehman Sobhan turns 90 today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

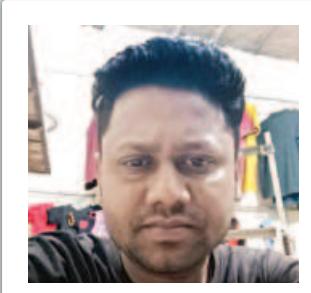
Today marks the 90th birthday of Prof Rehman Sobhan, a name that resonates with dedication to the development of Bangladesh.

A towering figure in the country's academic and policy circles, he has devoted his life to advocating for a more equitable and just society, blending scholarly rigour with a commitment to social change.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Hastily buried in unmarked graves



SOHEL RANA
WENT MISSING ON JULY 18
FROM JATRABARI
BURIED ON JULY 24



FAISAL SARKER
WENT MISSING ON JULY 19
FROM UTTARA
BURIED ON JULY 24



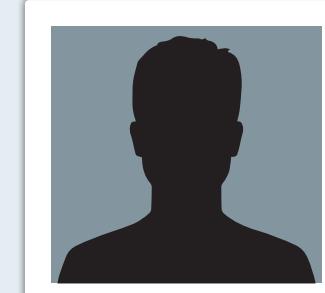
MD ASSADULLAH
WENT MISSING ON JULY 19
FROM UTTARA
BURIED ON JULY 24



RAFIQUL ISLAM
WENT MISSING ON JULY 19
FROM GOPIBAG
BURIED ON JULY 24



MAHIN MIA
WENT MISSING ON JULY 19
FROM MOHAMMADPUR
BURIED ON JULY 24



AHMED JILANI
WENT MISSING ON JULY 20
FROM DEMRA
BURIED ON AUGUST 31

FROM PAGE 1

At least 12 of these 19 people went missing on August 4 and 5 from Dhaka, Savar, Gazipur, Sirajganj, Panchagarh and Bogura amid clashes and police firing.

The fact-finding report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) cited senior security officials' testimony, saying deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina herself ordered security forces to "arrest the ringleaders of the protests, the troublemakers, kill them and hide their bodies."

However, there is no official account yet of how many bodies were actually hidden by the state apparatus.

The Daily Star investigated 31 cases of unclaimed or missing bodies, but evidence suggests that the actual number is higher.

Over the last two months, we have

pieced together hospital records and police inquest reports as well as records from Anjuman Mufidul Islam, a charity for burial service, and Rayerbazar graveyard, and found evidence of deliberate attempts by state forces to kill protesters and hide their bodies.

THE UNMARKED GRAVES

Anjuman Mufidul Islam is the only burial service in the country that handles unclaimed bodies. We reviewed its register and found that the charity buried 515 bodies from January to November 2024, an average of 47 bodies per month.

However, the body count jumped after the middle of July. Only in the last 10 days of that month, when police, Rab, BGB, Ansar and armed forces members were called in to tackle the protesters, Anjuman sent 45 bodies for burial in the Rayerbazar

"The night he disappeared, we kept our front door open, thinking he would come home at any moment. My son never came home. Now I cannot even find his grave."

RASHEDA BEGUM
Sohel Rana's mother.

graveyard, just two less than its monthly average.

Anjuman's register shows it did not send a single body for burial from August 1 to 11, despite an intensified



Burial of eight unidentified bodies related to the July massacre is underway at Rayerbazar graveyard on July 24, 2024.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Sohel Rana's mother Rasheda Begum weeps as she touches the photo of her son at an exhibition.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

crackdown between August 2 and 5. But in the remaining 20 days, it buried 34 bodies.

We went to see the burial sites at Rayerbazar on January 29. Block 4 of the cemetery contained 114 graves without names or any other identifiable markings. Grave staffers said many were victims of the July

uprising, but could not give a figure.

Analysing Rayerbazar's register, we found that 27 bodies buried in July and 13 in August had dates of death between July 17 and August 5, the final and the deadliest three weeks of Sheikh Hasina's 15-year authoritarian rule, when hundreds were killed and thousands injured by state forces.

Four children

FROM PAGE 12

around a year ago and filmed the incident. Since then, he had been blackmailing her and had raped her multiple times.

On January 29, he forcibly entered the victim's home and raped her again. She filed the case on March 10, said Md Hasan, officer in charge of Terokhada Police Station.

Police arrested Mofiz on Monday night. He was sent to jail by a court yesterday. Mofiz stands accused in six criminal cases, including a murder case, the OC added.

In Chattogram, a court yesterday sent a man to jail on charge of raping a 10-year-old girl.

Citing the case statement, police said Md Youcef, 71, of Sitakunda upazila, raped the girl on Monday evening. Locals later caught the accused.

On information, police arrested Yusuf. The victim's mother lodged the case with Sitakunda Police Station, said Sohel Rana, in charge of Foujdarhat police outpost.

Yesterday, Yusuf was sent to jail after he was produced before a local court, said the police officer.

In Jamalpur's Madarganj upazila, a teenage boy was sued on Monday night over raping a four-year-old girl.

Police said the 16-year-old boy raped the girl on Monday evening luring her with chocolates.

The victim's mother lodged a case that night. The accused went into hiding since the incident, said Hasan Al Mamun, OC of Madarganj Model Police Station.

In another incident, a case was filed against a 55-year-old man on Monday night over attempting to rape his five-year-old granddaughter in the district's Melandah upazila. The accused is on the run, said Shafiqul Islam, OC of Melandah Police Station.

In another incident, police held Jamal Hossain, 32, a construction worker, on Monday on charge of raping a mentally challenged girl in Bandarban's Rowangchhari upazila.

Quoting locals, police said Jamal took the 16-year-old girl to a nearby bush and raped her. Hearing her screams, locals rescued the girl and caught Jamal.

In Dhaka's Savar, a youth was sued yesterday over raping an eight-year-old girl in Ashulia area.

According to the case statement, Md Russell, 19, a resident of Bhol's Lalmoni upazila, is a relative of the victim's family. Russell went to the victim's home around two weeks ago in search of a job.

The victim's parents work in garment factories. When the couple went to work around 6:00 am on Monday, Russell raped the girl. Hearing her screams, neighbours rescued the girl and caught Russell.

The victim's father lodged a case with Ashulia Police Station yesterday. Police are trying to arrest the accused, said Kamal Hossain, inspector (investigation) of the police station.

[Our correspondents from respective districts contributed to this report.]

Court orders to freeze Tk 600cr

FROM PAGE 1

The three-storey building and the land is valued at Tk 3.3 crore, according to the property registration documents.

The court has also ordered the confiscation of a flat in Gulshan owned by Rehana's daughter and former British minister Tulip. This flat, purchased in 2002, is valued at Tk 43.24 lakh.

Additionally, two plots of land in Kaliakoir registered to Rehana — one measuring 8.5 decimals and another 1.55 decimals — will be seized. These are valued at Tk 8.75 lakh and Tk 3 lakh, respectively. Her flat in the capital's Segunbagicha, valued at Tk 18.15 lakh, will also be seized.

Two flats owned by Radwan in Niketan, valued at Tk 1.73 crore and Tk 3.08 crore, will be seized.

THE BANK ACCOUNTS

In various bank accounts, around Tk 1.29 crore of Hasina and over Tk 81 lakh

Rehana and over Tk 2.72 crore in joint accounts of the two sisters have been frozen.

As per ACC records, Joy's Tk 1.17 lakh, Putul's Tk 2.76 crore, and Radwan's Tk 1.27 crore have been frozen.

The list contains Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust's Tk 47.81 crore, Centre for Research and Information's Tk 55.74 crore, Awami League's Tk 37.82 crore, and Suchona Foundation's Tk 31.60 crore.

Additionally, the court has ordered the freezing of multiple accounts of Rehana's husband Shafiq Ahmed Siddiqi, their family members Bushra Siddiqi and Shaheen Siddiqi, Abu Siddiq Memorial Trust, and Thames Industry.

The court has also ordered the freezing of Tk 5 in mobile banking service Nagad accounts of Hasina and Rehana.

APPOINTMENT OF RECEIVER

The court ordered appointing administrators to look after the properties of Joy, Putul, Rehana, Radwan and Tulip.

On December 17, last year, the ACC

launched a probe into allegations of embezzlement of Tk 80,000 crore against Hasina and her family members from nine projects, including the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

On December 22, 2024, the commission also launched an investigation into allegations that Hasina and Joy laundered \$300 million to the United States.

On Monday, the ACC approved the charges against the deposed prime minister and her family members in six cases filed against them over the alleged misuse of power to obtain plots under the Purbachal New Town Project.

Three people were killed in the attack, which both sides said was the biggest so far on Moscow. Russia's army said it intercepted 337 drones around the country.

Zelensky, who met Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler in Jeddah on Monday, left the White House late last month without signing an agreement pushed by Trump that would give the United States control over Ukrainian mineral resources.

Zelensky has said he is still willing to sign, although Rubio said it would not be the focus of yesterday's meeting.

Rubio, who is accompanied by national security advisor Mike Waltz, said the aid suspension was "something I hope we can resolve" in the talks.

Rubio said the United States had not cut off intelligence for defensive operations.

Asked whether the overnight drone attack could derail peace talks, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said: "There are no (peace) negotiations yet, so there is nothing to disrupt here."

For its part, Russia has escalated strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure and said it had taken 12 settlements in its Kursk region that Ukraine had captured in a bid for bargaining leverage.

In the infamous White House meeting last month, Zelensky refused to bite his tongue in the face of criticism from Vice President JD Vance, with the Ukrainian leader questioning why his country should trust promises from Russia.

He has since written a repentant letter to Trump.

Faced with Washington's pressure, Ukraine will lay out its support for

Bangladesh

the succeeding elected governments, which included the Awami League and the BNP, implemented the recommendations.

Many of the suggestions of the task forces remain relevant even today as the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus strives to rebuild institutions through reforms.

In 1993, Prof Sobhan founded the Centre for Policy Dialogue to pursue an argumentative approach to socioeconomic and political development of the country. Currently, he is the chairman of CPD.

His work extends beyond the halls of academia and think tanks. Throughout his career, he has consistently collaborated with policymakers, international organisations, and global forums, applying his expertise to address a broad range of issues.

His influence extended beyond Bangladesh, as he has become a sought-after speaker on development economics and social justice, sharing his insights into how countries in the Global South could pursue growth while reducing inequality.

One of the most defining aspects of his career has been his insistence that true development can only be achieved when economic growth is inclusive, sustainable, and people-centred.

He has repeatedly argued that development policies should not only focus on GDP growth but must also ensure that the benefits of that growth are equitably distributed among all sections of society.

Prof Sobhan, who has held a number of important professional positions, has published a large number of books, research monographs, and articles in professional journals.

Ukraine, US start partial truce talks in Jeddah

FROM PAGE 12

are to meet in the French capital tomorrow. EU and Nato representatives and the Ukrainian defence minister will also take part.

Kyiv officials said the "largest drone attack in history", in which hundreds of drones slammed into Moscow and other areas overnight, was intended to push Russian President Vladimir Putin to agree to the aerial and naval ceasefire.

"This is an additional signal to Putin that he should also be interested in a ceasefire in the air," said Andriy Kovalenko, a national security council official responsible for countering disinformation.

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Faced with Washington's pressure, Ukraine will lay out its support for

Protest march foiled by police

FROM PAGE 1

The women were kicked after they fell to the ground. They have left us with no choice but to create a mass movement for the home adviser's removal," she said.

Masud Alam, deputy commissioner of Ramma Division Police, said at least eight police personnel were assaulted by the protesters.

The protester, mostly students, demand exemplary punishment for rapists, amendment of relevant laws, and formation of a special tribunal to handle rape cases.

Amid a spate of incidents of violence against women, students began protests earlier this week.

Yesterday morning, students from 30 colleges demonstrated at Shahbagh with similar demands.

Around midday, they kept the Shahbagh intersection blocked for half an hour and then demonstrated in front of the National Museum for several hours.

There were also a rally and a torch procession on DU campus last night.

Focus on public issues, not just reforms
Tarique urges political parties

UNB, Dhaka



B N P
Acting
Chairman
Tarique
Rahman
yesterday
urged political parties to present proposals to the nation to address public issues, rather than focusing only on reforms to the state structure and institutions.

"Instead of merely discussing the caretaker government system, the constitutional framework, and the voting and electoral system, there should be more emphasis on how the problems of people will be resolved," he said.

He made the remarks while virtually joining an iftar party organised by the Nationalist Democratic Movement in the capital.

Tarique said just as there should be discussions

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CHILDREN IN ROHINGYA CAMPS

Malnutrition reaches alarming levels: Unicef

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Severe acute malnutrition in the Rohingya refugee camps has surged by 27 percent in February this year compared to the same period last year, pushing more children into life-threatening hunger, Unicef said in a statement yesterday.

More than a million Rohingyas, including 5,00,000 children, live in the Cox's Bazar camps, where families now face emergency levels of malnutrition.

Meanwhile, the World Food Programme (WFP) is preparing to cut monthly food rations from US \$12.5 to US \$6 per person starting April 1, following fund cuts from USAID under the Trump administration's new policy.

On March 6, WFP made an urgent appeal for \$15 million for April and \$81 million to sustain aid for the Rohingya refugees until the end of the year.

Unicef said over 15 percent of children in the camps are now malnourished – the highest level recorded since the 2017 mass displacement of Rohingya refugees.

Last year, Unicef treated nearly 12,000 children under five suffering from severe acute malnutrition, a condition that leaves them dangerously thin, weak, and highly vulnerable to disease.

Of those treated, 92 percent recovered. However, without urgent intervention, this condition can be fatal, said Unicef.

"In 2025, cases of severe acute malnutrition increased by 25 percent in January compared to the same month last year (rising from 819 to 1,021 cases). February saw an even steeper increase of 27 percent (from 836 to 1,062 cases), indicating a dangerous upward trend," it added.

Unicef attributed this surge to multiple factors, including prolonged monsoon rains in 2024, which

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China supports growth of Bangladesh

Says Chinese ambassador

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

China wants to see stability, unity, and democracy flourish in Bangladesh under Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus' leadership, said Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen yesterday.

Yao Wen also emphasised that China stands with Bangladesh and its people, not any particular government.

"Regardless of changes in the international or domestic landscape, China remains Bangladesh's partner. Our cooperation benefits both nations," he said.

He was speaking at a seminar titled "National Image of China in Bangladesh" organised by the Center for Alternatives (CA) at a hotel in the capital.

Regarding the chief adviser's visit to China from March 26-29, Wen said China invites all heads of government but could not comment on visit priorities.

At the programme, CA Executive Director Prof Imtiaz Ahmed presented a

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SAUDI ARABIA

Complex attestation rule reduces worker deployment: BAIRA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies have claimed that complications in attesting demand letters for recruitment are causing a decline in the deployment of workers to Saudi Arabia.

To address the issue, BAIRA representatives met yesterday with Prof Asif Nazrul, adviser to the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

Following the meeting, they told journalists that the adviser would hold discussions today with all relevant stakeholders to determine necessary actions. However, no ministry officials spoke to the media.

Demand letters for worker recruitment from Saudi Arabia are verified and attested by the Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh.

BAIRA leader Khandaker Abu Ashfaq said that if a demand letter is for a single worker, embassy attestation is not required.

"However, if there is more than one worker in a demand letter, attestation is mandatory. This has led to delays, preventing the timely deployment of workers. Previously, attestation was not required for up to 24 demand letters. However, on December 22 last year, the government introduced a new rule requiring attestation in all cases. Business owners are now demanding a return to the previous rule," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Students from various colleges in the capital gathered at Shahbagh yesterday to protest the recent surge in rape and violence against women. They demanded immediate action from the interim government and swift justice for the perpetrators. Similar protests have been spreading across the country over the past week.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

JS, constituent assembly polls can be held together

Says NCP Convener Nahid Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The next national election could be held simultaneously as both legislative and constituent assembly polls, said National Citizen Party (NCP) Convener Nahid Islam yesterday.

Speaking at an iftar event organised by the NCP, he said that the election could pave the way for drafting a new constitution, facilitating a transition towards democracy.

The event, held at the InterContinental Hotel in the capital, was attended by anti-fascist politicians, students, labourers, scholars, activists, professionals, and eminent citizens.

Nahid said the NCP believes the election process can be completed within the timeline set by the government.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has previously said that the elections could take place by December this year or in the first half of next year. However, Nahid emphasised the need to improve law and order before holding the polls.

"For free and fair elections, the army, police, bureaucracy, and media must remain neutral, and their institutional impartiality must be ensured," he added.

He also called for effective government measures to ensure women's safety, combat corruption and extortion, and tackle violence against women.

"Recently, we have observed attempts to portray

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

EC weighs three voting methods for expatriates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is considering three alternative voting methods, including a proxy voting system, to ensure Bangladeshi expatriates can exercise their franchise in the national election.

A workshop with experts is scheduled for early April, followed by consultations with political parties and stakeholders. The final decision will depend on stakeholder consensus.

The proposed methods include a postal ballot system with a specified timeframe, an online voting system, and a proxy voting system, according to the EC.

If all processes are completed, proxy voting could be implemented on a broader scale, while postal and online voting may be introduced on a trial basis in the upcoming 13th national parliamentary election.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Abul Fazl Md Sanauullah shared the information with reporters at the EC building yesterday.

"Among the three proposed methods – postal, online, and proxy voting – the commission will first seek expert opinions on proxy voting. If agreed upon and technically feasible, it may be introduced on a limited scale," he said.

"Proxy voting allows a designated voter in Bangladesh to cast a vote on behalf of an expatriate," he explained, adding that identity verification, security, and reliability are key concerns here.

The EC's committee on expatriate voting rights has suggested a roadmap, which the commission approved yesterday, said the commissioner.

The committee recommended trial runs for postal and online voting to assess feasibility, he added.

Sanauullah pointed out that proxy voting is used in the UK and Australia, while India permits it only for armed forces personnel.

Complex

FROM PAGE 3

"If every recruitment letter has to be attested separately, it takes a lot of time. If we revert to the previous process, sending workers will be much easier," he added.

Former BAIRA joint secretary Fakhrul Islam said for a long time, demand letters for up to 24 workers required only attestation from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), not the embassy.

"The embassy cannot verify all recruitment requests. This sudden rule change has resulted in a decline in worker deployment. If this rule remains, the number of workers sent abroad will decrease further," he said.

BAIRA members explained that 85 percent of workers travelling from Bangladesh to Saudi Arabia are recruited through small-scale demand letters, typically for one to 24 workers.

Due to the attestation requirement, visa processing has been disrupted, they said.

On February 5, BAIRA members staged a human chain in front of the expatriates welfare ministry to demand the reinstatement of the previous attestation process.

Later, they submitted a memorandum to the ministry, alleging that a Malaysian citizen and his Bangladeshi associate extorted Tk 1,07,000 from each worker through illegal means.

They demanded strict legal action against them to prevent the formation of any new syndicate.

According to BMET sources, in September last year, 44,229 workers travelled to Saudi Arabia. The number surged to 83,582 in October and remained steady for three months.

In January, it slightly decreased to 76,618. However, in February, the number of workers sent to Saudi Arabia dropped to 44,258.

JS, constituent assembly polls

FROM PAGE 3

Bangladesh and Islam negatively on the global stage. The government must take a firm stance against terrorism and extremism, and we must also reinforce this position through social and political platforms," Nahid added.

He urged all political parties to unite in support of democracy and national harmony while opposing corruption and "Mujibism".

The dangers facing Bangladesh have not yet subsided. Anti-Bangladesh forces are still conspiring.

"Military and civilian bureaucracies, mafia business groups, and foreign powers could exploit disunity among politicians and mass uprising forces," he said.

Nahid also demanded swift and visible trials against "fascists". "Through this justice, we aim to

politically address the Awami League's actions," he said.

He stressed that the National Consensus Commission must expedite the implementation of the July Charter. He added that the interim government could quickly implement recommendations from public administration and the police through ordinances.

NCP Member Secretary Akther Hossen urged all political parties to unite in demanding the trial of Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League, accusing them of genocide and mass killings.

Hasnat Abdullah, NCP's chief organiser for the southern region, called for unity to ensure a democratic transition.

The iftar event was attended by BNP standing committee member Salahuddin Ahmed, Joint

happen if food rations are cut further and nutrition treatment services stop," said Rana Flowers, Unicef representative in Bangladesh.

At the beginning of 2025, Unicef estimated that 14,200 children in the camps would suffer from severe acute malnutrition this year.

Declining food rations, poor diets, and limited access to safe water and healthcare could push this number even higher. Children with severe

malnutrition are 11 times more likely to die than their well-nourished peers without timely treatment, the statement also said.

"These families cannot safely return home, and they have no legal right to work, so sustained humanitarian support is not optional -- it is essential," Flowers said.

"Unicef is committed to delivering for these children, but without guaranteed funding, critical services will be at risk," she warned.

Malnutrition reaches alarming

FROM PAGE 3

worsened sanitation and led to severe diarrhoea, cholera, and dengue outbreaks. Additionally, intermittent food ration cuts over the past two years and a growing influx of families fleeing violence have worsened conditions.

For now, we can provide the services that Rohingya mothers seek and the sick children need, but as needs rise and funding declines, families are terrified of what will

happen if food rations are cut further and nutrition treatment services stop," said Rana Flowers, Unicef representative in Bangladesh.

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Focus on public issues

FROM PAGE 3

and proposals regarding the control of prices for essential goods, the market system, and the production system, there should also be debates among political parties on how to ensure primary healthcare for people.

"Why aren't we talking about these issues? Isn't reform necessary to

change the market system, boost production, and improve the healthcare and education systems?" he questioned.

The BNP leader said as political parties are meant to serve people, they should also focus on critical issues related to public's interests.

Tarique said political parties should present plans on how they will keep

commodity prices within the purchasing power of the common people.

He said reform is also essential for overhauling the country's education system.

"If we fail to establish a proper education system for future generations, how can we possibly move this country forward?" Tarique also said.

Ensure

FROM PAGE 3

Secretary General Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Annie, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman, Nagarik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Revolutionary Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Haque, AB Party leader Asaduzzaman Fuad, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis and Hefajat-e-Islam leader Mamunul Haque, Bangladesh Labour Party Chairman Mostafizur Rahman Iran, and Islami Andolan Bangladesh Presidium Member Ashraf Ali Akon.

Poet, writer, and thinker Farhad Mazhar, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam, Kaler Kantho Editor Hasan Hafiz, Supreme Court Bar Association President Mahbub Uddin Khokon, and leaders of various student organisations also attended.

Palguni Tripura, a member of the Bangladesh Adiavasi Forum, stressed the need for inclusive access to public toilets, particularly for indigenous and gender diverse individuals.

She highlighted severe water shortages in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the lack of toilets in schools and colleges.

If these issues remain unaddressed, girls will continue facing risks of harassment and assault while travelling," she warned.

Shireen Pervin Hug, chief of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission, urged speakers to submit recommendations for improving WASH facilities, as their final report is set for release next week.

Shamim Ara Shammi, program manager of BRAC's Ultra-Poor Graduation Program, and Mostafizur Rahman, national program officer at the Embassy of Sweden, were also present, among others.

China supports

FROM PAGE 3

2024 survey showing that 99 percent of respondents support China-Bangladesh friendly relations.

Positive perceptions of China rose to 66.7 percent in 2024 from 60.1 percent in 2022, he said.

Referring to the data, Yao Wen said Bangladeshi view Chinese investment and bilateral cooperation positively, boosting China's confidence in strengthening strategic partnership between the countries.

On the Rohingya crisis, Yao Wen said China mediated, but efforts stalled due to Myanmar's worsening security situation. Then Prof Imtiaz Ahmed said China should initiate a development plan for Rakhine State to create conditions for the repatriation.

DU Prof Dr Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir said China's poverty reduction model could be a case study for Bangladesh.

Retired Prof Amena Mohsin and independent researcher Syed Shahanzaw Mohsin also spoke at the event.

Retired teacher, son assaulted

FROM PAGE 5

He noted that children in urban slums have inadequate water and sanitation, leading to a 30 percent higher health risk than rural children.

Poor sanitation triggers a cycle -- diseases like diarrhoea worsen malnutrition, leading to stunted growth, cognitive delays, and hindered education, ultimately affecting economic prospects and the nation's future potential, he added.

"Challenges related to WASH conditions include stress and sexual harassment, with young girls being particularly vulnerable," he said.

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Retired Prof Amena Mohsin and independent researcher Syed Shahanzaw Mohsin also spoke at the event.

claim," she said.

"Recently, Section 144 was imposed over the disputed portion of our land. However, Nayon has been trying to prevent us from using the rest of our properties. He also demanded Tk 5 lakh from my husband and son with a spade," she said.

"I am now living amid fear that Nayon may launch an attack again," Mira added.

Asked, Nayon claimed his father had purchased the 61.5 decimals of land from Nani Gopal.

"As Shambhu was trying to sell trees from the disputed land, I protested him. This led to an altercation and a fight between us," he added.

He refuted allegations of demanding Tk 5 lakh from Shambhu and assaulting Nani Gopal.

Nayon's younger brother, Al Amin Ferdous Shimul, however, said their father late Gazi Hafizur Rahman never told them anything about buying the 61.5 decimals of Nani Gopal's land.

"If my father had bought more than the 15 decimals of land, he would have told us about it," he said.

Rubel Gazi, a member of local Samudaykathi union, said he was unsure if Nayon's claim of the land was true.

Contacted, Boni Amin, officer in-charge of Nesarabad Police Station, said they are trying to arrest Nayon in a case filed by Nani Gopal Sarkar for assaulting him and his son.

Nayon is also accused in several criminal cases, the OC added.

পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলজি

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আরিখ ০১০/০৩/২০২৫

e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার গ্রিডের জিএমডি, ঢাকা (ডেভ-পিচিম) দলের আওতাধীন নিয়ন্ত্রিত দরপত্র e-GP পোর্টেলে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

ID	Reference	Title of Works
1080550	27.21.0000.633.07 .001.25.175; Date: 06.03.2025	Procurement of Stationary Goods for GMD office, Agargaon, Mirpur, Kallyanpur, Savar & Satmasjid Grid Substation under GMD, Dhaka (North-West), Power Grid.
1080551	27.21.0000.633.07 .001.25.176; Date: 06.03.2025	Procurement of Sanitation and Cleaning Goods for GMD office, Agargaon, Mirpur, Kallyanpur, Savar & Satmasjid Grid Substation under GMD, Dhaka (North-West), Power Grid.
1080552	27.21.0000.633.07 .001.25.177; Date: 06.03.2025	Construction of protective pillars for protection of Tower (Tower No. 2, 11 of Aminbazar-Kallyanpur 132 KV and Tower No. 49 of Kallyanpur-Lalbag 132 KV transmission line under Kallyanpur 132/33 KV Grid Substation GMD, Dhaka (North-West), Power Grid.

আগ্রহী টিকাদারী প্রতিটিনকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

শেখ কুতুব উদ্দিন পলাশ

নির্বাচী প্রকৌশলী, জিএমডি, ঢাকা (ডেভ-পিচিম)

Chattogram Maa-O-Shishu Hospital Medical College

(A project of Chattogram Maa-O-Shishu Hospital)

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Wanted

- Principal**
Candidate should have educational qualification and experience as per BM&DC rules. Preference will be given to candidates with working experience.
- Professor**
(Department of Obs. & Gynaec/Medicine/Biochemistry/Anatomy/Physiology/Pharmacology/ Paediatrics/Cardiology/Ophthalmology/Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation/Neuro Medicine /Skin & V.D/ Thoracic Surgery/Respiratory Medicine/Paediatric Surgery/Radiology & Imaging). Candidate should have educational qualification and experience as per BM&DC rules. Preference will be given to candidates with working experience.
- Associate Professor**
(Department of Paediatrics/Medicine/Paed



Despite a Tk 7.16 crore project, the canal remains clogged as locals cite mismanagement and irregularities, while authorities defend their efforts. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

One more dead in N'ganj gas explosion
Death toll now four

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Narayanganj

The death toll in the gas explosion incident in Siddhiganj of Narayanganj rose to four yesterday, after another victim succumbed to the injuries.

Dr Shawon Bin Rahman, a resident surgeon at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, confirmed that Sohag, 23, a garment worker, who had suffered 40 percent burns, died while undergoing treatment in the hospital's intensive care unit around 1:30am yesterday.

With him, all three members of his family, including his wife Rupali, and daughter Sumaiya, have died.

The family lived in the rented house in Dhankunda area of Siddhiganj where the explosion occurred on March 3 from gas leakage.

Another victim, Md Hannan, 40, a rickshaw puller who suffered 45 percent burns, earlier died on Saturday.

Hannan's wife, Nurjahan Akter Laki, 30, and their children - Jannat, 3; Samiya, 9; and Sabbir, 16 - are still undergoing treatment at the burn institute.

GORER KHAL IN BANIACHONG UPAZILA Flawed excavation project puts canal on deathbed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Gorer Khal, a 19.2-kilometre-long canal crisscrossing across Baniachong upazila of Habiganj, used to be a vital lifeline for the region's agriculture, communication and flood management.

However, it has long been on death bed due to illegal encroachment, pollution and siltation.

To revive this vital waterway, the Bangladesh Water Development Board launched an initiative to excavate across 31.6km of the canal and its branches at a cost of Tk 7.16 crore in 2022-23 fiscal year.

Around a year and half later, the canal's situation hardly improved, while the authorities concerned claimed they did as far as they could regarding the excavation project.

Local residents alleged the project has been implemented amid irregularities and misappropriation of funds, due to which the expected outcome could not be achieved.

"When the canal's excavation began, we had high hopes that the initiative will improve irrigation and navigation. Now, it's clear that the project was just a cover for looting public money. Not even half of the canal has been excavated, and the work that has been done was unplanned and ineffective," said Ataur Rahman Milon, a trader at Baniachong Bazar.

"The authorities engaged in corruption and mismanagement to misappropriate the funds while poorly

executing the project," alleged Shipon Mia, a local resident.

Azizur Rahman from Sheikhher Mohalla said instead of excavating the main canal, the project largely focused on digging the canal's branches, which was often unnecessary.

"Also, the excavation was conducted without defining the canal's location and evicting the encroachments," he added.

Fazal Mia, another local, said the soil dug from the canal was piled up along the banks, and was washed into the canal again after rains during monsoon.

"Hardly anything changed about the canal's condition. The excavation work did not cover even half of the canal's length. Some portions of the canal have completely disappeared due to illegal land grabbers encroaching on it," he added.

According to the project's plan, a total of 4,000 trees were supposed to be planted along the canal's banks, but local said no trees were planted yet.

Shamim Hasnain Mahmud, executive engineer of BWDB in Habiganj, however, claimed it was not possible to excavate the entire canal due to various obstacles.

"About 70 percent of the canal has been excavated. We have done as far as we could. However, due to the poor quality of work, only 54 percent of the contractor's bill has been paid," he said.

"Since this is a nationwide river-canal excavation project, the remaining fund may have been allocated to other districts," the official added.

INT'L CRIMES TRIBUNAL Complaint filed against Sheikh Helal, 5 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A complaint was filed with the International Crimes Tribunal yesterday accusing former Awami League lawmaker Sheikh Helal Uddin and five others of shooting at protesters during July Uprising in Khulna.

Nayeem Shikder, a student shot and wounded in police firing on August 4, lodged the complaint with the ICT chief prosecutor's office.

The other accused are former Khulna City Corporation mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque, his wife and also former AL MP Habibun Nahar, Sheikh Helal's son and former AL MP Sheikh Tommoy, and Helal's brothers Sheikh Salihuddin Jewel and Sheikh Sohel.

"We came to know that some protesters were detained at the then-mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque's house. As we went there to rescue them on August 4 afternoon, armed Jubo League and BCL men, as well as some 25-30 policemen, fired at us indiscriminately upon instruction of the accused," Nayem said in the complaint.

"I was hit by a bullet and hundreds of lead pellets. I collapsed while bleeding profusely before fellow students rescued me and took me to three private hospitals, where the doctors denied me treatment," he also said.

"Requested, a doctor later treated me on the road to stop the bleeding. Later, I was taken to Khulna 250-bed hospital, where the doctors once again refused to treat me. A doctor, upon request, removed the bullet without using anaesthesia and dressing the wound," Nayem added.

Meanwhile, the ICT yesterday issued arrest warrants against 10 persons, including policemen and AL leaders, in connection with the killing of Shaikh Ashabul Yamin, a student of Military Institute of Science and Technology, in Savar on July 18.

The ICT, led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, passed the order after the prosecution filed a petition yesterday in this regard.

TK 1,128CR GRAFT ACC to sue Lotus Kamal, 31 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

ACC has decided to file cases against 32 individuals, including wife and daughter of former finance minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, known as Lotus Kamal, and owners of 12 recruiting agencies, for embezzling and laundering Tk 1,128 crore through a syndicate that overcharged Malaysia-bound workers.

Confirming this development yesterday, ACC Director General (Prevention) Akhtar Hossain said the accused charged workers nearly five times the government-set rate of Tk 78,990, collecting exorbitant sums from 67,380 individuals.

The ACC approved the cases yesterday, with owners and top officials of 12 recruiting agencies being named as defendants.

The ACC claims the syndicate includes former MPs Nizam Uddin Hazari (Feni 2), Masud Uddin Chowdhury (Feni-3), and Benazir Ahmed (Dhaka-20), along with AHM Mustafa Kamal.

One such agency, M/s Orbital Enterprise, allegedly took an additional Tk 100.98 crore from 6,029 workers. The company is owned by Kamal's wife, Kashmira Kamal, also named in the case.

Retired teacher, son assaulted over land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A retired school teacher and his son have been injured in an attack by a neighbour over a land dispute in Moishani village of Pirojpur's Nesarabad upazila.

The incident occurred on Saturday afternoon when Nani Gopal Sarkar, 85, and his son Shambhu Sarkar, 45, were beaten up and left injured allegedly by their neighbour Gazi Manir Ferdous Nayon alias Nayan Gazi, 50.

The victims are now undergoing treatment at Barishal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Institute of Public Health
Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.

Website: www.ipb.gov.bd, e-Mail: ipb@id.dgbs.gov.bd



Date: 10/03/2025.

e-Tender Notice

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, please registration on the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>), For more details, please contact support desk contract numbers.

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Dr. Md. Mominur Rahman, Director, Institute of Public Health (IPH), Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212 for the Procurement of:

Tender ID No	Description of Work	Tender/Proposal Last Selling (Date & Time)	Tender/Proposal closing (Date & Time)
1075525	Procurement of Machineries of ORS for the F.Y. 2024-25	24-03-2025 at 15.30 hours	25-03-2025 at 13.00 hours
1085048	Procurement of Furniture for the F.Y. 2024-25	24-03-2025 at 15.30 hours	25-03-2025 at 13.30 hours

e-Tender details can be downloaded on e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for pursuer. e-Tender will be accepted only as stated in above list; accepted tender will be opened online immediate as stated in above list.

10/03/25
(Dr. Md. Mominur Rahman)
Director
Institute of Public Health
Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.

The people's Republic of Bangladesh

National board of Revenue

Bangladesh Regional Connectivity project 1:
National Single Window Implementation and strengthening Customs Modernization
IDEB Bhaban (10th floor), 160/A, Kakrail, Dhaka

Memo no. 1(192) Active items/ Hardware /NSW/2024/2648

Date: 11.03.2025

Subject: Addendum to bidding document for supply and Installation of Hardware and Infrastructure (network, communication, cabling etc.) and standard software for NSW solution; other network, communication equipment, structure, Hardware and cabling: Server & Storage and Network & Security components for NSW Server Room & DR. Bangladesh Regional Connectivity project 1: Request for Bids (RFB) No. NBR-GD2A.1.

Addendum No. 9

This is for the information of all Bidders concerned that the following amendments have been made for the procurement mentioned in the subject above;

Ref	Existing Entry	Amended entry
SI No. of 6, SPN ITP-23.1 & 26.1	The deadline for Bid Submission is: Date: March 13, 2025, Time: 14.00 hours. Date & Time for Bid Opening March 13, 2025, Time :14:30 hours	The deadline for Bid Submission is: Date: April 21, 2025, Time: 14.00 hours. Date & Time for Bid Opening April 21, 2025, Time :14:30 hours

All the terms and conditions of bidding Documents (RFB) NBR-GD2A.1 shall remain unchanged. This Addendum No.9 shall be considered an integral part of the Bidding Documents and shall be binding on all Bidders who have obtained or will obtain the Bidding Documents from the Purchaser.

(Pramila Sarker)

Deputy Project Director

Bangladesh Regional Connectivity project 1:

National Single Window Implementation and strengthening Customs Modernization

Email: pdnsw.nbr@gmail.com



পরিদ্বন্দু-উল-ফিফ্র/২০২৫ উপলক্ষ্যে বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে নিম্নোক্ত সময়সূচী অনুযায়ী টিকিট বিক্রয়ের ব্যবস্থা এবং করেছেঁ

ঈদ যাত্রার অগ্রিম টিকিট বিক্রয়ের সময়সূচীঃ

ক্রমিক নং	টিকিট ইস্যুর তারিখ	যাত্রার তারিখ
১.	১৪/০৩/২০২৫	২৪/০৩/২০২৫
২.	১৫/০৩/২০২৫	২৫/০৩/২০২৫
৩.	১৬/০৩/২০২৫	২৬/০৩/২০২৫
৪.	১৭/০৩/২০২৫	২৭/০৩/২০২৫
৫.	১৮/০৩/২০২৫	২৮/০৩/২০২৫
৬.	১৯/০৩/২০২৫	২৯/০৩/২০২৫
৭.	২০/০৩/২০২৫	৩০/০৩/২০২৫

ঈদ ফেরত যাত্রার অগ্রিম টিকিট বিক্রয়ের সময়সূচীঃ

ক্রমিক নং	টিকিট ইস্যুর তারিখ	যাত্রার তারিখ
১.	২৪/০৩/২০২৫	০৩/০৪/২০২৫
২.	২৫/০৩/২০২৫	০৪/০৪/২০২৫
৩.	২৬/০৩/২০২৫	০৫/০৪/২০২৫
৪.	২৭/০৩/২০	

There's no need for constituent assembly

FROM PAGE 1

out this constitutional responsibility. However, due to the exceptional nature of the current situation, the Election Commission will need to rely on the interim government to act in this regard.

TDS: Are you seeing any visible initiatives from the government towards holding the elections within the time frame?

SA: A few days ago, I mentioned at an event that people want to see visible steps towards holding the elections by December. So far, the chief adviser has only stated that a dialogue process has begun under the leadership of the National Consensus Commission. This dialogue has a specific time frame, and within the time frame, they aim to establish a broader consensus. This will require several months.

The first meeting, held on February 15, may be termed the first visible step. By now, they have provided us with reports (of the reform commissions), which we are currently reviewing. There

initiate the reforms, but implementing consensus-based reforms requires significant time. That is why we are continuously pursuing them to expedite the transition to a democratic process so that an elected government can be formed and a national parliament can be established where all necessary discussions on reforms could be held and a greater consensus over the reform proposals could be made. However, they are yet to do the expected job.

Meanwhile, some political parties and groups are seemingly trying to delay this process. The purpose and expectation of the mass uprising – which led to the fall of fascism – was to achieve one goal: remove undemocratic forces permanently and establish a strong democratic nation by carrying out reforms in the constitution and all other state institutions.

This goal cannot be achieved through holding local government elections. Therefore, we believe that those pushing for local government elections first intend to delay the transition to a democratically elected political government.

TDS: What is your take on the newly announced student-led political party, the National Citizen Party (NCP)?

SA: We welcome any political party with a democratic nature that enters the political arena. We believe in democratic politics because our party's founder, the martyred President Ziaur Rahman, was the proponent of multi-party democracy. We have welcomed them. We always hope for a participatory political environment. Beyond that, we have no immediate reaction. They will conduct their activities based on their ideology and strategy. However, we hope they will play a role in establishing a stable political government through national parliamentary elections as soon as possible. That is our expectation.

TDS: Leaders of NCP have spoken about a Constituent Assembly and a Second Republic. You have said that those advocating for these ideas are either knowingly or unknowingly prolonging the existing undemocratic structure. Could you explain this further?

SA: Let me start with the Constituent Assembly first. A Constituent Assembly is only necessary when a new state is created with no written constitution. So, to draft a new constitution, a Constituent Assembly is needed in that newly-born country. To prepare a draft of the constitution, a drafting committee is formed. For example, a Constitution Drafting Committee was formed after the creation of Bangladesh. Similar committees were formed in India and Pakistan as well after their independence. Dr Kamal Hossain was the chairman of the constitution drafting committee in Bangladesh. The job of the Constituent Assembly is to draft a constitution, which will then be adopted.

Now, do we have any context for a Constituent Assembly here? We are already an independent country – a sovereign, independent state – and

we call ourselves a democratic state. However, the question arises as to whether we truly are a democratic state, as our democracy has been compromised by the past fascist regime on their behalf. Country comes first, then sovereignty and the state, and only after that comes democracy. Now, I am not sure if the new political party that brought forth the idea of this Constituent Assembly truly understands this. They have submitted extensive proposals to the Reform Commission for constitutional reform, and so have we and other parties. There will be discussions on those proposals, and through comprehensive deliberations, a democratic amendment to the present constitution will be made. And it is the work of the parliament. I think there has been some overlap in their thinking between the work of the parliament and the work of the Constituent Assembly. Because the parliament makes amendments to the constitution while the Constituent Assembly is tasked

Republic?

SA: We are already a republic established through the 1971 Liberation War. It is not desirable to undermine the republic, which we earned at the cost of the past fascist regime. A republic can be formed by having an independent state, and we have an independent state and a republic that has been established through the formulation of a constitution. The essence is that a republic functions through elected representatives, chosen to express the will of the people. These representatives are elected and replaced through subsequent elections. This is a republic where the head of state is either elected or a nominal head of state. We already have such a republic.

Now the question arises: Is our republic still in the same state as the first one we established? I would say that there have been changes. The first republic was fundamentally altered in 1975 through the introduction of BAKSAL (Bangladesh Krishak Sramik

and Jamaat is now quite noticeable. Why has this gap widened? Has BNP organisationally been harmed by forming an alliance with Jamaat?

SA: The political party you are referring to has its own ideology, and they have their own strategy in relation to the upcoming elections. They will proceed with their own approach and continue their ideology-based politics.

It's quite common in many countries for various political forces to form alliances before elections. However, the formation of an electoral alliance with them is not on our discussion table right now. Instead, we can contest the elections by forming alliances with those who were part of our simultaneous movement against fascism. And if, in the future, the people entrust us with the responsibility of governing, we will implement our reform proposals through the formation of a "government of national unity" with them.

With regard to the question of whether we were harmed organisationally due to the alliance, I would say one thing: In politics, various strategies are applied at different times for political movements, struggles, and elections. The question of gains and losses is ultimately determined by history and the people of the country.

TDS: There has been a discussion about banning Awami League. What is your opinion? Do you want the Awami League to participate in the upcoming elections?

SA: The mass killings during the July uprising were carried out as per the Awami League's political decision and under the orders of the party chief, fascist Sheikh Hasina, who was an illegitimate prime minister at the time. The Awami League is organisationally responsible for crimes against humanity, massacre, and mass killings. In line with this, the student organisation of the Awami League has already been banned under a specific law. Now, the question arises whether the Awami League itself, as a political organisation, should be brought under judicial proceedings for genocide and crimes against humanity. This is a demand of the people, and the government must decide on this matter. Now, the ball is in the court of the interim government.

Fascist Sheikh Hasina, her ministers, MPs, and the political leaders of the Awami League – who are responsible for genocide and crimes against humanity – must be brought to justice and face trial. The issues of whether the Awami League could do politics and elections in Bangladesh would be decided by the people of the country. The government also has responsibility here.

TDS: The interim government has now completed seven months in office. What is your comment on the government's performance?

SA: Seven months is a sufficient period to assess a government's performance. Our overall assessment is that, due to inexperience, this government has failed to meet public expectations, even after these seven months. People had expected that

commodity prices would come within their purchasing capacity, law and order would give them a sense of security, and the market situation and political situation would stabilise. However, the government could not handle any of these areas successfully or control the situation effectively. Perhaps they took charge of the government on the ruins of a collapsed system. Or perhaps their lack of experience played a role in this. However, we have always cooperated with them and will continue to do so. We expect that they will govern properly for the remaining days of their term through discussions with all relevant stakeholders, ensuring that their actions align with public expectations.

TDS: According to AIN o Salish Kendra's report and media reports, 40 BNP leaders and activists have been killed in the past seven months due to internal conflicts. At the BNP extended meeting on February 27, the acting chairman issued strict directives against such conflicts. Despite that, clashes have

"Our overall assessment is that, due to inexperience, this government has failed to meet public expectations, even after these seven months."

occurred in several districts. What is your view on this?

SA: I have doubts about how credible this statistic is. However, political rivalries do exist in a large political organisation. As the elections approach, this kind of competition and rivalry can be seen among the supporters of various candidates. Some incidents may have happened, and those are undesirable. We are making efforts to control such incidents with firm hands, and our efforts will continue.

There have been allegations that some leaders and activists are involved in extortions. We have investigated many cases. In our findings, it appears that those involved have no real connection to the BNP or any political party. They operate like a professional extortion ring, using the names of political parties whenever it benefits them. In some cases, it's been revealed that activists of the fallen fascist Awami League and miscreants are involved in doing all these crimes with malafide intention in labelling the name of BNP. We have to say that as a party, we have become victims of this situation. At the grassroots level, out of 100 incidents, investigation reveals that in 98 percent of the cases, those involved had no direct political affiliation, but they are using the party's name for their own benefit.

TDS: Thank you very much for your time.

SA: Thank you as well.

"The political party led by students wants a new constitution through the Constituent Assembly. At the same time, they are also saying that they have made proposals for constitutional amendments. These are self-contradictory statements. If they have proposed a major constitutional amendment, as we have, and others have as well, then a parliament will be required to consider those, not a Constituent Assembly."

with drafting and adopting a new constitution in a newly born country. We are already in a "self-determined nation state" with a constitution, but we cannot fully accept it because its democratic nature has been altered by an autocratic regime. That's why a measure democratic amendment to the constitution is required again.

Meanwhile, the honourable High Court has already scrapped several provisions of the 15th amendment to the constitution. It, however, kept several provisions for the next parliament to consider and recognise that parliament is the proper forum to amend the constitutional provisions. It's our commitment to have the existing constitution amended as per the people's desire and the aspirations of the July uprising.

Presently, we have made extensive reform proposals for the independence of the judiciary. Through these amendments, the original and democratic nature of the republic could be restored. The nature of the republic will be democratic, and the constitution will be amended according to the aspiration of the people. If we want to call this the Second Republic, this is anyone's liberty. But a republic is a republic. We can bring back the democratic nature of the republic through constitutional reforms in the future, but that does not mean we call it a new republic, a second or third republic, and so on each and every time the constitution is amended.

TDS: What about the Second

Awami League) following the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution. However, that republic was restored in 1979 through the Fifth Amendment. President Ziaur Rahman reintroduced multi-party democracy and replaced the parliamentary system with a presidential system of governance. In 1991, we shifted to a parliamentary system [Westminster type of government] again. In 1996, we introduced a neutral caretaker government provision for having free and fair elections. But we cannot term all those major changes in constitution as a new republic each and every time.

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TDS: The distance between BNP

and

night and March 6 morning.

The child was taken to Magura 250-bed hospital in an unconscious state by her sister's mother-in-law around 11:30am on March 6.

She was transferred to Faridpur Medical College Hospital for better treatment that afternoon. Later that night, she was moved to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

By March 7 night, she was placed on life support. As her condition remained critical, she was moved again from Dhaka Medical College Hospital's PICU to CMH the next day.

research. However, he declined the award, saying, "It is not possible for me to accept this award."

Notably, a draft list of the awardees included the name of MAG Osmani, the commander-in-chief of the Mukti Bahini during the Liberation War.

However, his name was not included in the list that was published yesterday.

The Chief Adviser's press wing yesterday said his name was dropped as he had already received the Swadhinata Padak in 1985 and that there were no precedence of one being given the award twice.

for his contributions to literature. Novra Ahmed has been recognised for her impact on culture, and Sir Fazle Hasan Abed for his exceptional work in social service. Azam Khan has been given the award for his contributions to the Liberation War and culture.

Additionally, Abrar Fahad has been recognised for his role as a young protester in the movement for democracy. All of the individuals are being honoured posthumously.

Meanwhile, Badruddin Mohammad Umar has been awarded for his contributions to education and

interrogation, we learnt that the child's sister's father-in-law alone committed the crime. But other family members later tried to cover up the incident by torturing the victim and her sister.

"We are investigating... nothing can be said clearly now. We may be able to say after the interrogation and getting other evidence," the official told this correspondent.

The third-grader was visiting her elder sister's house in Magura town as her school was closed for Ramadan. She was raped there between March 5

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Migration issue EU to pave way for return hubs

AFP, Brussels

The EU is expected to open the way for member states to set up migrant return centres outside the bloc -- a highly contentious idea -- following pressure from governments to facilitate deportations.

"We want to put in place a truly European system for returns, preventing absconding, and facilitating the return of third-country nationals with no right to stay," commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said Sunday.

A souring of public opinion on migration has fuelled hard-right electoral gains in several EU countries, upping pressure on governments to harden their stance.

Led by immigration hawks including Sweden, Italy, Denmark, EU leaders called in October for urgent new legislation to increase and speed up returns and for the commission to assess "innovative" ways to counter irregular migration.



A resident stands in the courtyard of his house while smoke rises from a fire following a strike on the outskirts of Odessa yesterday. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: AFP



Hundreds of train passengers taken hostage in Pakistan

AFP, Quetta

Armed militants yesterday held hundreds of train passengers hostage in an ongoing siege claimed by a separatist group behind rising violence in southwestern Pakistan.

The militants wounded the driver as they took control of the train in a remote, mountainous area of Balochistan province which borders Afghanistan and Iran.

"Over 450 passengers onboard are being held hostage by gunmen," Muhammad Kashif, a senior railway government official in Quetta, the capital of the province, told AFP.

"Passengers include women and children," he added.

The attack was immediately claimed by the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) which is fighting for independence and accuses outsiders of profiting from the region's wealth.

Pakistani sources who spoke to the media on condition of anonymity said an operation "to eliminate the terrorists is ongoing with extreme caution due to the difficult terrain", adding that women and children are "being used as human shields".

The incident happened around 1:00pm in rural Sibi district, near a city station where it had been due to stop.

"A passenger train called the Jaffar Express was stopped by armed militants," said a senior government official in Sibi.

The train had left Quetta for Peshawar, in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa -- a more than 30-hour journey -- at around 9:00am.

Israeli air strike kills four in Gaza amid 'truce'

Arab nations condemn Israel's Gaza electricity cut; outrage as US arrest pro-Palestinian activist

AFP, Gaza City

An Israeli air strike hit Gaza City yesterday, with the civil defence agency reporting four men killed and the military saying it had targeted "terrorists" posing a threat to troops.

Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for the Gaza Strip's civil defence agency, told AFP that the Israeli strike "on a group of citizens in the Netzarim area in south Gaza City" resulted in "four martyrs including two brothers", all men in their 20s.

Israel has carried out nearly-daily air strikes in Gaza since early March, often targeting what the military said were militants planting explosive devices.

A fragile truce in its war with Hamas, in effect since January 19, has largely held despite the attacks and with no agreement yet on extending the ceasefire.

The first phase of the truce ended in early March, but both Israel and Hamas have refrained from returning to all-out war.

Hamas has repeatedly called for implementing the second phase of the ceasefire, which should lead to a permanent end to the war, a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the release of more hostages in return for Palestinian prisoners.

Israel says it prefers an extension of phase one of the ceasefire until mid-April.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, Qatar

and Jordan yesterday condemned Israel's decision to cut electricity supply to the war-battered Gaza Strip, calling in separate statements for the international community to take action.

Israel announced on Sunday it was disconnecting the only power line to a water desalination plant in Gaza, in an effort to pressure Palestinian militant group Hamas

demonstrations at Columbia University, as President Donald Trump vowed further crackdowns.

Mahmoud Khalil, a recent graduate and one of the most prominent faces of the university's high-profile protests, was arrested by US immigration officials over the weekend despite holding a permanent residency green card.

The Department of Homeland



Women mourn over the body of man who was killed in overnight Israeli bombardment on a refugee camp in Gaza Strip yesterday.

into releasing hostages amid an apparent impasse in truce talks.

In the US, protesters in New York and rights groups expressed outrage Monday over the arrest of a leader of pro-Palestinian

Security, confirming Khalil's arrest on Sunday, claimed he had "led activities aligned to Hamas" and that the DHS action was taken "in coordination with the Department of State."

India contradicts Trump's claims on tariff

AFP, New Delhi

India says it has not committed to slashing import duties on US products, days after President Donald Trump announced that New Delhi had agreed to "cut their tariffs way down".

Only weeks into his second term, Trump has opened global trade, targeting friends and foes alike. He has also blamed all trading partners of "unfair" practices, and has announced reciprocal tariffs on many countries, including India, to begin from next month.

Trump once again railed at India's "massive tariffs" last week.

"You can't sell anything into India, it is almost restrictive," Trump said. "They have agreed, by the way, they want to cut their tariffs way down now because somebody is finally exposing them for what they have done," he added.

But the Indian government told a parliamentary panel that "no commitments had been made to the US on the issue," a report in The Times of India newspaper said Tuesday.

The government "has sought time until September to address the issue that is being repeatedly flagged by the American president," it added.

India's commerce secretary Sunil Barthwal "said that India and the US were working towards a mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement, focusing on long-term trade cooperation instead of merely seeking immediate tariff adjustments".

Dalai Lama book to guide Tibetans after his death

AFP, New Delhi



The Dalai Lama published a book yesterday that he says is a "framework for the future of Tibet", to guide compatriots in relations with Beijing after his death.

China -- which says Tibet is an integral part of the country -- has responded by saying the Dalai Lama "has no right to represent the Tibetan people".

Many exiled Tibetans fear Beijing will name a successor to the Dalai Lama when he dies, bolstering control over a land it poured troops into in 1950.

The book, "Voice for the Voiceless", describes the Dalai Lama dealing with successive leaders of the People's Republic of China on behalf of Tibet and its people.

Over centuries, Tibet has alternated between independence and being controlled by China.

Celebrating his 90th birthday in July, the Dalai Lama is among a fading few who can remember what their homeland was like before the failed 1959 uprising.

He fled to India that year, and said the book details the "persistent efforts" he has made over seven decades to "save my homeland and people".

"Despite all the suffering and destruction, we still hold fast to the hope for a peaceful resolution of our struggle for freedom and dignity," the Dalai Lama said in a statement about the book.

"From a 19-year-old negotiating with Chairman Mao at the height of his powers in Beijing to my recent attempts to communicate with President Xi Jinping, I convey in this book the sincerity of our efforts. ... My hope is that the book will... provide a framework for the future of Tibet even after I am gone."



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department
Chapainawabganj.

Memo No. 38/e-GP/EED/Chapai/4931/SHED/2024-25

Date: 11/03/2025.

e-Tender Notice No: 38

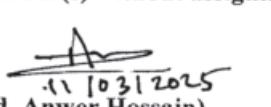
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following works under EED Chapainawabganj as mentioned below:

Tender ID	Name of works	Publication Date/time	Closing date & Opening Date
1085948	Repair And Rehabilitation Of Borgachi Govt. High School, Bholahat, Chapainawabganj. FY (2023-24)	11.03.2025 at 15.00	25.03.2025 at 15.00
1085949	Block-D Repair and Renovation Works (Sanitary work, Plastering & Painting work) & Construction of Shahid Minar At Nachole Khurshed Molla Govt. Girls High School, Nachole, Chapainawabganj (Fy: 2023-2024).	11.03.2025 at 15.00	25.03.2025 at 15.00

This is an online Tender where only e-Tender will be acceptable in the National e- GP system 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.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender(s) without assigning any reason what so ever.


 (Md. Anwer Hossain)
 Executive Engineer
 Education Engineering Department
 Chapainawabganj.

GD-643



Dhaka South City Corporation
Zone-5 (Sayedabad)

www.dhakasouthcity.gov.bd

Dated: 10/03/2025

e-Tender Notice

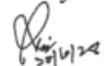
e-Tenders are invited in e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, Zone-5, Dhaka South City Corporation For the procurement of following package, which will be available at e-GP website form 09/03/2025 at 22.00 PM.

Sl No.	Tender ID, Ref No & package No	Name of works	Last Selling date and Time	Tender Closing Date & Time
1	Tender ID- 1077061 egp/dscc/z-05/24-25/P-16	Development works of lane and bylane road adjacent to Noakhali Patti and Muradpur High School (Road ID- 0552L-5687,5688, 5689, 5691, 5692, 5714, 5729, 5730) including drain under ward-52.	03-Apr-2025 13:30	03-Apr-2025 15:30
2	Tender ID- 1081801 egp/dscc/Z-05/24-25/P-17	Repairing works of road cutting done by different organizations all wards Under Zone-5 at Dhaka South City Corporation.	03-Apr-2025 13:30	03-Apr-2025 15:30

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

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(6x4)


 (Zahid Ahmed)

Executive Engineer
Zone -5 (Sayedabad)
Dhaka South City Corporation

Choking on apathy and neglect

Urgent actions needed to tackle our air pollution crisis

It is disappointing that Bangladesh and the landlocked nation Chad have been ranked as the world's most polluted countries in 2024, with their average smog levels exceeding WHO guidelines by more than 15 times, according to Swiss air quality monitoring firm IQAir. It is little wonder, then, that air pollution causes 102,456 deaths in Bangladesh every year, as the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) recently estimated. Other studies over the years have painted a similarly grim picture. These findings should spur frantic efforts to reverse this trend. The question is, why don't they?

The CREA study highlighted that young children are particularly vulnerable, with 5,258 annual deaths from PM2.5 related lower respiratory infections. It estimated that controlling air pollution could prevent 5,254 child deaths each year and avert 29,920 deaths from heart disease, 23,075 from strokes, 20,976 from COPD, 9,720 from pneumonia, and 3,063 from lung cancer. Additionally, pollution-related illnesses lead to 669,000 emergency hospital visits annually and 263 million lost workdays, significantly harming the economy. Similarly, a World Bank report estimated air pollution caused between 78,145 and 88,229 deaths in Bangladesh in 2019. Another study found it shortens the average Bangladeshi's life expectancy by 6.8 years. Despite these staggering consequences, successive governments have taken minimal action. Vehicle pollution remains high, industrial and power plant emissions go largely unregulated, and construction activities and waste burning continue unchecked.

The persistently high pollution levels highlight not only a lack of ambition in policymaking but also a failure to enforce existing regulations. The absence of regular monitoring mechanisms to uphold air quality standards is another major shortcoming. In spite of these failures, the responsible authorities are never held accountable. This must change. Despite concerns caused by the recent US decision to end a programme that many countries relied on for air quality data, the government must take responsibility for developing its own robust air quality monitoring and improvement systems. Investing in its own air quality monitoring infrastructure would be a crucial first step.

Bangladesh also needs to adopt a multi-pronged approach to tackle the deteriorating air quality. Stricter enforcement of emission regulations for industries and vehicles is essential. Brick kilns and factories—both major polluters—must be required to use modern filtration systems, while large-scale afforestation and urban greening initiatives should be undertaken to help absorb pollutants. Construction activities should also be regulated with dust-control measures, and waste burning should be strictly prohibited. Ultimately, the government and other stakeholders must realise that without urgent, science-backed intervention, the country risks an even graver public health and economic crisis in the coming days.

Ensure justice in rape cases

The trial process must be both swift and flawless

Amid nationwide protests against the surge in incidents of rape and harassment of women and girls, the interim government has pledged to amend relevant laws to expedite the trial process for rape cases. The law adviser has stated that law enforcement agencies will have to complete the investigation of such cases within 15 days and the trial within 90 days. He mentioned another potential amendment, saying that even if the trial is not concluded within 90 days, the accused cannot be granted bail on this basis. While it is good to see that the interim government is finally addressing legal concerns surrounding gender-based violence and has proposed some positive reforms, words alone will not suffice. Concrete actions are needed to implement these changes and ensure justice for victims of rape.

Expediting justice by reforming relevant laws and procedures is key, but any amendment must be finalised after consulting with legal experts and all other stakeholders. While investigations and trials in rape cases must be speedy, the process must also be flawless. In Bangladesh, faulty investigations are a major obstacle to delivering justice. Since, according to the country's law, the maximum punishment for rape is the death penalty, rushed and flawed investigations should not be encouraged. Also, for a proper investigation of rape cases, forensic reports are essential. If forensic reports are omitted to reduce investigation time, will it ensure justice?

Therefore, instead of merely shortening the investigation time for rape cases, it is crucial to ensure that forensic examination results are provided to investigating officers as quickly as possible. This is unlikely with only two forensic labs available in the country. The government, therefore, needs to set up more such labs as well as streamline the operations of existing ones. Furthermore, the investigation process for rape cases requires an overhaul, as weak investigative procedures often lead to delays in case proceedings. This is why, despite numerous rape cases being filed, only a handful result in convictions.

We urge the government to do everything in its capacity to ensure both swift and flawless justice in rape cases. It is encouraging to learn that the government has instructed law enforcement agencies to compile a list of all incidents of violence against women that occurred during the tenure of the interim government and submit it to the court. We hope they will follow through on this directive and ensure justice in each case. The pervasive culture of impunity that fuels sexual harassment and violence must be eradicated.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Worldwide health alert issued for SARS

On this day in 2003, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a worldwide health alert, one of the first in a decade, regarding an illness it later called severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) that struck hundreds of people in China, Hong Kong, and Vietnam.

EDITORIAL

Giving people power beyond the ballot box



Dr Mirza Hassan
is based at Brac Institute of Governance and Development at Brac University. He can be reached at mirzahass@gmail.com.

MIRZA HASSAN

"For the youth, democracy is not merely about elections. It's about dismantling systemic barriers, amplifying marginalised voices and ensuring fairness."

General students interviewed by The Daily Star.

"To institutionalise democracy, elections are the only path."

Mirza Fakhrul, General Secretary of BNP.

The quotes above show the stark differences in the ways young educated citizens and mainstream political elites of Bangladesh perceive democracy. Students' capacious view of democracy has indeed been endorsed and adopted by theorists of democracy and democratic activists globally, given the glaring deficiencies of representative democracy to robustly uphold the collective interests of the people. The central argument is that democracy is not just about elections. Democracy is also a method whereby citizens can exercise their power alongside and beyond the ballot box through direct and collective engagement with the state to provide inputs to decision-making. More critically, citizens can directly participate in the checks and balances process, which are not possible through representative democracy. This idea of citizen-led collective form of democracy also needs to be differentiated from the notion of direct democracy (referendums and recall, for example) since this method still leaves the elected representatives only in charge.

On a conceptual level, this collective and direct/participatory form of democracy privileges equality of outcomes over the equality of opportunities. Equality of outcomes ensures that disadvantaged citizens are making disproportionately positive gains, which was reflected in the student's demand as quoted above. Conversely, equality of inputs aims to provide same opportunities to everyone to make those gains. When we think in the line of equality of opportunity, we assume democracy as an instrument to make collective decisions on equal basis, which compels us to articulate it only in liberal procedural terms, such as equal opportunities for opposition MPs, possibilities of floor crossing, neutrality of the speakers, bi-cameral system and so on. Such assumptions tend to ignore the prevailing balance



FILE VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

of social and economic power in the larger polity and society that ultimately shapes whatever procedures we use in the deliberation processes. Consequently, democracy must also be about resisting and neutralising state capture by the political, social and bureaucratic elites, in the domains of political, economic, social, and ideological processes to ensure disproportional positive gains of the marginalised.

We are currently witnessing massive initiatives, led by the interim government, to reform the state and political institutions to develop robust and resilient checks and balances mechanisms to prevent any reversal towards autocracy by keeping political elites rule-bound and making them operate within a narrow corridor. Different commissions have been tasked with the aggregation of citizens' preferences to reform and come up with agendas for the relevant stakeholders to deliberate.

The major thrusts of the commission's recommendations were largely based on the assumptions of representative democracy being the only game in town. The checks and balances mechanisms they aimed to develop predominantly involved elected political actors with the implicit assumptions that they would have *necessary and sufficient incentives to balance each other*. It is a largely false assumption, as our political history amply demonstrates. Commissions did recommend citizens' direct participation, both individually and collectively, but in a very weak and marginal manner. For the commissions, the state has

small group, have better coordination and collective action capacity, which enable them to form political oligarchy. Think of the specific case of duty-free import of cars by the parliament members. MPs across the political divide had no incentive to end this legal but systemic corruption. Furthermore, perpetuation of the policy of whitening of black money indicates that political oligarchy could easily and successfully collude with the economic oligarchy. As our political history shows, there were many such perverse consensuses among the political elites (ruling and opposition) that they were happy to live with. Proposals of the commissions have largely failed to address these political realities and associated incentives of the politicians.

Commissions' recommendations to place individual non-partisan citizens, to be nominated by the elected politicians (and president) in the upper chamber (in the proposed bicameral system) with diverse socio-economic and gender backgrounds, will, perhaps, add little value in terms of citizen-initiated checks and balances. The reasons are: i) individuals with de facto partisan background will enter the upper house. They will be least interested in being disloyal to the political party as patron, and voting against the party policies/decisions; ii) even if they are truly non-partisan they can be intimidated and co-opted (with material offer); iii) in general, individualised representation is no match for collective representation of the citizens in terms of collective self-rule and the prevention of the state capture.

The Electoral Reform Commission's recommendations in terms of direct democracy, including recall, referendum and no vote will surely add value to checks and balances. But it is still political elite-centric, sporadic, and it deploys individualised mode of citizen representation (secret ballot). Unlike deliberative democracy, such secret voting does not allow for collective reasoning and reflection. Moreover, large-scale voting can only offer very coarse-grained checks and balances. It is heavily susceptible to ideological and other forms of meta level factors contributing to behind the scene manipulation by the political and economic elites.

The central focus of the reform commissions seems to be deterring monopolisation of power in the political domain rather than dispersion of power across state and society. We are not proposing that this political centric mode of checks and balances is abandoned. Rather this should be complemented by the constitutionalised and collectively organised societal constraints to deter systemic corruption (legal or illegal). To achieve the latter, we need to introduce checks and balances both within and outside the state in the following ways:

i) Within the interfaces of state and society, constitutionally mandated permanent national commissions (like the existing Human Rights and Public Service Commissions) with more independence must be created. Such commissions should also be set up for women, ethnic groups, labour and other marginalised groups to empower them. The more commissions, the merrier.

ii) Checks and balances institutions located entirely outside the state must be created by establishing constitutionally mandated citizen assemblies. Existing citizen-centric political infrastructures at the level of union parishad such as Ward Shabha and Open Budget Meetings and their counterparts in the urban areas, can be easily converted to robust forms of citizen assemblies being endowed with sufficient legal mandates. Such forums can also be created at the upazila parishad level.

iii) Within the state, collectively organised citizens' associations, based on professional, gender, ethnic categories etc, should be allowed to nominate their representatives in the upper chamber of the parliament with the power to recall.

Our critical concern is to guard the guardians—to prevent political party elites from capturing accountability institutions. Fundamental institutions and policies should be protected from such capture by creating societal countervailing powers so that ordinary citizens can benefit from robust checks and balance mechanisms.

PROFESSOR REHMAN SOBHAN'S 90TH BIRTHDAY

A life dedicated to pursuit of social justice



Mamun Rashid
is chairman of Financial Excellence Ltd and founding managing partner of PwC Bangladesh.

MAMUN RASHID

I met Professor Rehman Sobhan for the first time in 1980 after taking admission to Jahangirnagar University to study economics. I came across him more frequently after starting to visit the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies for supporting papers and further studies. Gradually, I got to witness him speaking at the seminars and symposiums hosted by the Bangladesh Economic Association, loudly advocating for the interests of people in the lower strata of society. He was incredibly articulate and delved deeply into the topic of discussion.

Beyond his towering intellect, Professor Sobhan has mentored generations of economists, policymakers, and thinkers. His presence in a room commands respect not for the sake of authority but for the sheer depth of his wisdom. I recall a conversation in which he said that the moral obligation of economists requires them not just to analyse but to act.

As time went by, I found out that Professor Sobhan is much more than just an economist. He is a public policy champion, an institution, and a guiding force whose intellect, courage, and unwavering commitment to justice have shaped the very fabric of Bangladesh's economic and political landscape. As he reaches 90, we celebrate an extraordinary

life that has been nothing short of legendary. His brilliance, foresight, and relentless pursuit of equity continue to inspire, proving that true visionaries never grow old; they only grow more profound in their impact. It is the truest in the case of Professor Sobhan, whom I see drinking life to the lees, dancing on the floor, and smiling with his sharp eyes even today.

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During the Liberation War of 1971, Professor Sobhan transcended the role of a thinker and became a warrior for justice, serving as a roving ambassador for the Provisional Government of Bangladesh.

He carried the cause of an unborn nation to the world stage, securing global recognition for Bangladesh's right to freedom. Few scholars have had the privilege of shaping not only their time's intellectual discourse but also their nation's very destiny.

His post independence

research and governance, and ensuring that economic growth is pursued through the lens of justice and inclusivity.

A prolific writer and a towering public intellectual, Professor Sobhan's work, which spans 27 books and over 140 articles, continues to shape economic thoughts and governance. His seminal writings do not merely analyse poverty and inequality; they challenge the very structures that sustain them. His book *Untroubled Recollections: The Years of Fulfillment* is not just a memoir but a chronicle of a life dedicated to the relentless pursuit of justice and truth.

However, if anything is more awe-inspiring about Professor Sobhan than his past achievements, is his present vitality. At 90, he remains as engaged, passionate, and committed to his ideals as ever. His mind remains as sharp as his convictions, his energy as boundless as his vision. He is not just a scholar or a policymaker; he is a force of nature, a living testament to the idea that one man's intellect and integrity can shape the destiny of millions.

Happy 90th, Professor Sobhan! Your legacy is immortal, your impact immeasurable, and your inspiration eternal. Bangladesh and the world stand in gratitude.



Programme, he provided the economic rationale for Bangladesh's struggle for self-determination. This made him one of the builders of the "two-nation theory," which finally led to the independence of our nation.

During the Liberation War of 1971, Professor Sobhan transcended the role of a thinker and became a warrior for justice, serving as a roving ambassador for the Provisional Government of Bangladesh.

Contributions reflect his lifelong devotion to nation-building. As a member of the first Bangladesh Planning Commission, he played a pivotal role in steering the country's economic policies during its formative years. Yet his greatest legacy is perhaps the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), which he founded in 1993. Under his leadership, CPD has become a beacon of informed policymaking, bridging the gap between

Complicity in Rohingya genocide cannot go unpunished



Sirajul Islam
is a Rohingya poet, writer, and human rights activist, currently based in a Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. He has internationally published two collections of poetry and is now working on his third collection.

SIRAJUL ISLAM

The Rohingya are a minority ethnic group from Myanmar who have long been denied their right to citizenship and fundamental human rights. Several episodes of atrocities have been inflicted upon them since the 1962 military coup in Myanmar, which forced them to flee their land of origin frequently ever since.

Subsequently, in August 2017, the Myanmar military launched massive violence against the Rohingya, resulting in the deportation of over 700,000 people of the community. They eventually sought refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh. Since then, they have been trapped in a political dilemma in exile.

Cox's Bazar Rohingya refugee camp, known as the world's largest refugee camp, is home to one million plus Rohingya refugees. Some of them fled Myanmar during the outbreaks of violence before the August 2017 onslaught that has been classified as a genocide and termed as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing, according to the United Nations.

The Rohingya have desperately been undergoing a surreal struggle for justice and the restoration of their citizenship for decades. Their case has been filed in three international courts—UN International

Court of Justice, International Criminal Court and an Argentinean federal criminal court—and the Rohingya remain optimistic, resiliently waiting for justice and the courts' decision to hold the perpetrators accountable.

On February 13, 2025, the Argentinean court issued an arrest warrant under universal jurisdiction for 25 people, including General Min Aung Hlaing, the chief of the military, Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Peace laureate, 1991 and former state counsellor, and U Htin Kyaw, former president of Myanmar, for their collective complicity in committing the genocide against the Rohingya in August 2017.

After a long overdue wait for justice, this declaration of an international arrest warrant for the perpetrators of the genocide is a remarkable move towards justice and accountability for the Rohingya.

"This brings a ray of hope to Rohingya who have suffered through decades of genocide, watching their families and culture be destroyed with impunity. It is also a victory for international justice at a time of growing violations of international law worldwide," Tun Khin, president of the Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK), described in their press release on



The August 2017 Rohingya genocide has been termed as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing by the United Nations, which many quarters in Myanmar refuse to acknowledge.

the issuance of the arrest warrant.

Soon after the issuance of the arrest warrant, on February 18, 2025, the National Unity Government (NUG) released a statement urging the Argentinean court to remove the names of Suu Kyi and Htin Kyaw, particularly, from the prosecution.

It's quite appalling to see the NUG struggling to defend alleged genocidaires Aung San Suu Kyi and U Htin Kyaw, and trying to argue that they were not complicit in the genocide against the Rohingya in August 2017.

On February 19, 2025, U Ne Bone Lat, the NUG chief minister's office spokesperson,

told the Yangon-based media outlet Khit Thit Media that the NUG would use all protocols to revoke former State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from being included in the arrest warrant issued by the Argentinean court.

Moreover, the NUG has been silent during the atrocious crimes committed against the Rohingya by the Arakan Army, similar to the atrocities committed by the military against the Rohingya back in 2017. This clearly demonstrates the NUG's concerns towards the Rohingya.

Although Aung Kyaw Moe, a Rohingya, is NUG's deputy human rights minister, it does not ensure that the NUG recognised the

Rohingya as an indigenous ethnic group of Myanmar.

The recent statement released by the NUG shows their true face and that they have been playing a political game with the Rohingya. The inclusion of Aung Kyaw Moe in NUG is a mere strategy to gain international legitimacy.

Aung San Suu Kyi rejected allegations of Rohingya genocide at the International Court of Justice in 2019. This clearly shows her role in providing the political cover in executing this genocide.

"Aung San Suu Kyi is not only defending the military and the military's actions against ethnic nationalities, but she is also defending herself. She is potentially criminally liable for international crimes against the Rohingya. At this point, I think a lot of her denials about the realities on the ground are, at least to a certain extent, rooted in that," Matthew Smith, chief executive officer of Fortify Rights, told BBC in an interview back in late 2019.

In NUG's statement, they welcomed the efforts of the Argentinean court to punish the perpetrators, but they referred to the genocide committed against the Rohingya as mass atrocities, indirectly saying that it was not a genocide.

The international community now sees the other side of the NUG and Aung San Suu Kyi. Nobel Peace Laureate Suu Kyi, known as the mother of democracy in Myanmar, does not support recognition of the Rohingya's right to citizenship. Those envisioning a federally democratic, inclusive and equitable Myanmar should stop defending Suu Kyi. She deserves nothing more than criticism for her role in the Rohingya crisis. As an internationally wanted criminal, she should face justice.

US exit from Ukraine: A turning point in global power struggles



H. M. SABBIR HOSSAIN
is a student of International Relations at the University of Chittagong.

H. M. SABBIR HOSSAIN

The recent developments surrounding the US' withdrawal from its active support for Ukraine are set to have profound geopolitical ramifications. This decision, following heated exchanges in the Oval Office between US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Zelensky, signals a pivotal shift in the trajectory of the Russia-Ukraine war and broader global power dynamics.

President Trump's assertion that US involvement in peace talks would have been advantageous to Ukraine, coupled with the abrupt disengagement, highlights Washington's prioritisation of de-escalation over indefinite military entanglement. The immediate consequences will be most deeply felt by Ukraine, which has relied heavily on Western support to sustain its resistance against Russia. The war has already demonstrated that military engagements are not solely determined by battlefield strategy but also by the ability to secure long term logistical and intelligence support. The backbone of Ukraine's counteroffensive has been advanced US weaponry, particularly HIMARS, whose success was contingent on US



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, and French President Emmanuel Macron hold a meeting during a summit at Lancaster House in London on March 2.

PHOTO: AFP

The psychological toll of this shift cannot be overstated, as the perception of abandonment risks demoralising troops and complicating strategic planning. The immediate political consequence is that Kyiv's negotiating position is severely weakened.

cyber and satellite assistance. The cessation of such support renders these systems significantly less effective, exposing Ukraine to renewed vulnerabilities.

The impact extends beyond hardware deficiencies to a more critical challenge—morale. Ukrainian forces, who have fought fiercely in the belief that continued Western

support would eventually tip the scales in their favour, now face a stark reality where the largest contributor to their military effort has effectively stepped back. The psychological toll of this shift cannot be overstated, as the perception of abandonment risks demoralising troops and complicating strategic planning. The immediate political consequence is that Kyiv's negotiating position is severely weakened. The US' prior insistence on peace talks, coupled with economic pressures and dwindling supplies, will likely push Ukraine towards a settlement on terms less favourable than previously envisioned.

For Europe, the repercussions of US' retreat are equally significant. The European Union, despite its vocal backing of Ukraine, has long remained dependent on US military capabilities, particularly in intelligence gathering, satellite data, and weapons systems. With US stepping back, the question now arises as to whether European powers can fill the void. While the United Kingdom, France, and Germany possess military resources, their ability

some European states may push for increased military aid, others will likely advocate restraint, fearing the economic and security consequences of prolonged involvement.

The larger strategic fallout will be seen in Europe's defence policies. Historically reliant on US military dominance, European nations now face the necessity of bolstering their own capabilities. The recognition of vulnerabilities in air defence and missile deterrence is already prompting discussions on increased defence spending, with some assessments suggesting that Europe requires over a thousand long-range nuclear-capable missiles to establish credible deterrence against Russia.

However, such military expansion is not a short-term endeavour, and economic constraints will pose significant hurdles. In the long run, the prospect of an arms race in Europe could intensify regional tensions, raising the possibility of larger conflicts rather than ensuring stability.

Russia, on the other hand, stands

to gain significantly from this shift. With Ukraine's capacity to counterattack diminished, Moscow is likely to capitalise on the situation by intensifying its operations. The removal of US intelligence support further tilts the balance in Russia's favour, making it increasingly difficult for Ukraine to intercept and neutralise missile strikes. Reports of additional North Korean forces being sent to support Russian efforts underscore the Kremlin's strategy of leveraging allied resources to exert pressure on Kyiv. If Ukraine's defensive capabilities weaken substantially, the likelihood of Russia securing further territorial gains increases, placing additional strain on President Zelensky's government.

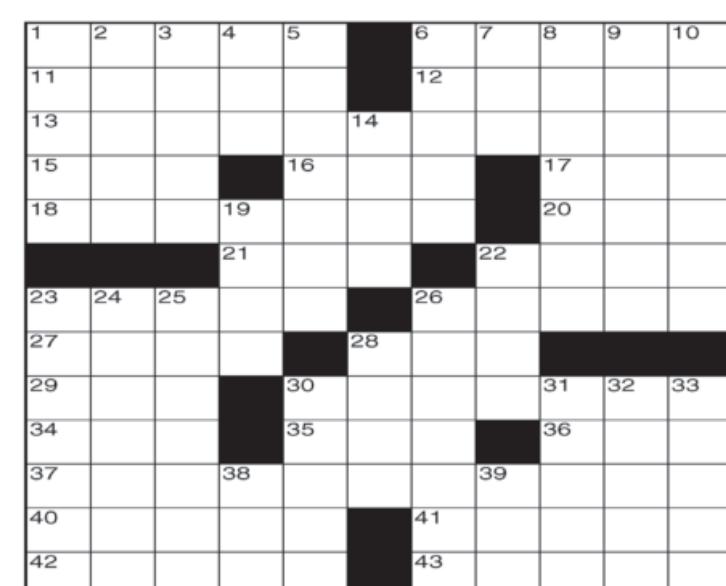
In Washington, the situation is further complicated by the unpredictability of US politics. If Donald Trump returns to power, the US approach towards Ukraine could shift even more dramatically. Trump's transactional foreign policy style suggests he may push for swift negotiations, possibly leveraging intelligence to pressure Kyiv into a settlement. The overarching implication is that Ukraine has limited options and may have to accelerate its diplomatic efforts to avoid further losses. The geopolitical repercussions extend beyond Ukraine and Russia. The US decision signals a broader recalibration of its global commitments, reflecting a shift from interventionist policies towards more calculated strategic engagement. This repositioning may erode global confidence in US commitments, reinforcing the perception that US alliances are conditional and subject to rapid change. Such a perception creates opportunities for rival powers, particularly China, to expand their influence by presenting themselves as more reliable partners in international diplomacy.

The broader takeaway from these developments is that war, particularly in the modern era, is as much about technological superiority and strategic alliances as it is about direct combat. The reliance on intelligence, cyber capabilities, and advanced military logistics has redefined the nature of warfare. The US' withdrawal from active involvement in Ukraine is not merely a shift in policy but a revelation of the structural limitations that even well-equipped nations face in sustaining prolonged conflicts. For Ukraine, the imperative now is to reassess its strategy in light of diminished external support, while Europe must confront the reality of its military dependencies. The consequences of this moment will reverberate far beyond the battlefield, shaping the geopolitical landscape for years to come.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Provide food for
6 Venomous snake
11 Throw with effort
12 Irritate
13 Military, navy, etc.
15 Diner dessert
16 Corn spike
17 Mine yield
18 Butler or maid
20 Animal abode
21 Golfer Ernie
22 Witty remark
23 Sells for
26 Some statues
27 Aware of
28 Egg layer
29 In the style of
30 Diet unit
34 Stumpy's pal
35 Maximum amount
36 Santa – winds
37 Groups of company vendors
40 Calendar entry
41 Question of place
42 Oboe parts
43 Classes

DOWN
1 Cowboy wear
2 Eagle's home
3 Circus performer
4 Genesis name
5 Gives out new hands
6 Left, on a liner
7 German article
8 Breaks a cipher
9 Himalayan peak
10 Bristles at
14 Stadium group
19 White House power
22 Jupiter's wife
23 More vulgar
24 Taking a sabbatical
25 Spider-Man creator
26 Accordion part
28 Sports period
30 Play groups
31 Indy entrant
32 Like argon
33 Moves cautiously
38 Final part
39 Pi follower



5-16

SATURDAY'S ANSWERS



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO
dsopinion@gmail.com

SAFF C'ship at centralised venue again

SPORTS REPORTER

The South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) has backtracked from the proposed new format of home and away, instead deciding to hold the 15th edition of the SAFF Championship at a centralised venue.

An executive committee meeting of the regional football body, in its previous meeting, had in principle decided to hold the tournament in home and away basis. Some 23 matches were supposed to be played in that format, but according a new decision yesterday, the number of matches will be trimmed if held at a centralised venue like the 14 previous editions.

"The SAFF Championship will be held at a centralised venue instead of home and away format. Either Sri Lanka or India is going to be the host but the final decision was not taken at the meeting," BFF general secretary Emran Hossain, who attended the meeting virtually from Dhaka, informed The Daily Star.

The championship is likely to be held between June 20 and July 8.

A source within the SAFF informed that the executive committee, who held a nearly two-hour meeting in Kathmandu yesterday with physical and online presence of participating nations, AFC representatives and marketing agent SportFive, backtracked from the proposed format due to the political uncertainty and election concern in both Bangladesh and Pakistan as well as unavailability of venue in Bangladesh.



With the aim of shaping up women's hockey in the country, the BRAC Bank Women's Development Cup Hockey 2025 began at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. A total of 11 teams are participating in this edition of the competition, with the Bangladesh Hockey Federation relaying that it will be keeping an eye on emerging players from this tournament to nurture them further with training facilities in the coming days.

What to WATCH

T SPORTS

DPL Live from 9:00 am

SONY SPORTS 2 Live from 2:00 am

Champions League

Lille vs Dortmund

Live from 11:45 pm

SONY SPORTS 5

Aston Villa vs Club

Live from 2:00 am

(Thursday)

SONY SPORTS 1

Brugge

Live from 2:00 am

(Thursday)

SONY SPORTS 1

Arsenal vs PSV

Live from 2:00 am

(Thursday)



PHOTO: REUTERS

Reasons why CR7 is still in Portugal squad

Despite turning 40, Cristiano Ronaldo continues to deliver the goods. Ronaldo's penalty and a brace from Jhon Duran fired Saudi Pro League side Al-Nassr into the quarterfinals of the AFC Champions League Elite on Monday, with a 3-0 second-leg win over Esteghlal. Ronaldo, who has now scored an unprecedented 927 career goals, was recently backed by Portugal coach, Roberto Martinez, for still including him in the national squad. "He is not in the team today for what he has been, but for what he continues to be: the top scorer with 17 goals in the 21 games we have played in two years," said Martinez in an interview with The Coaches' Voice.

SHORT CORNER

United to leave Old Trafford for 100,000-seat stadium

Manchester United on Tuesday announced plans to build a new 100,000-capacity stadium close to their historic Old Trafford home, which co-owner Jim Ratcliffe promised would be the "world's greatest" football ground. The stadium, which will be built on land surrounding Old Trafford, will cost around £2 billion (\$2.6 billion) and the project timescale is five years.

Australia-England 150th anniversary Test to be played under lights at MCG

Australia's clash with England to mark the 150th anniversary of the first Test match will be played as a day-nighter at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in March 2027, Cricket Australia said on Tuesday. The MCG hosted the first Test ever played in 1877 and the centenary match between Australia and England 100 years later. The hosts won both matches by 45 runs.

Pant urges young cricketers to prioritise national dreams over IPL
India's star wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant has advised young cricketers to focus on representing their country instead of prioritising the glamour of the Indian Premier League (IPL). "Since childhood, I had only one dream—to play for India. I never even thought about playing in the IPL. I think today, people are more focused on the IPL. Of course, it's a great platform, but I believe that if your goal is to play for your country, everything else—including the IPL—will eventually fall into place," said Pant.

**Read full stories on The Daily Star website

Atletico 'still alive' in battle against Real Madrid

AFP, Madrid

Atletico Madrid stare down both bitter city rivals Real Madrid and the weight of history as they aim to reach the Champions League quarterfinals on Wednesday.

Los Blancos are the record 15-time champions, the current holders, and lead 2-1 Atletico in the last 16 tie as well as seemingly holding a decades-long jinx on Atletico.

The teams have been paired on five occasions in the history of the competition, and Real Madrid have emerged triumphant every time.

"History exists, and Madrid's history in the Champions League is extraordinary," admitted Atletico coach Diego Simeone before the first leg, with his side still waiting for a first European Cup.

Most painful for Atletico were the 2014 and 2016 final defeats in Lisbon and Milan respectively.

The defeat in the 2016 final was their third defeat at the last hurdle, after losing against Bayern Munich in the 1974 final, with then-president Vicente Calderon labelling his club "el pupas" -- the cursed one.

Never does that feel more accurate than when Simeone's side face Real Madrid in Europe. Atletico were undone by Real in tight semifinal and quarterfinal ties in 2017 and 2015, respectively.

However, Atletico's motto is "courage and heart" and with nearly 70,000 fans behind them at their Metropolitan stadium, they will believe they can write



Atletico have not lost a home Champions League knockout-stage match since a 3-2 defeat to Ajax in March 1997, going unbeaten in 18 such contests since (W11, D7).

Atletico have lost just once in their past seven home game against Real Madrid in all competitions (W3, D3). In cup competitions, they are unbeaten in five home fixtures against their rivals, winning four and drawing the other.

Real Madrid had a streak of eight consecutive away victories against Atletico between January 2008 and

February 2014. However, since then, they have managed just three wins from 17 away games in this derby across all competitions (L7, D7).

Real Madrid have progressed 21 times from 22 Champions League ties when they've won the first leg. Under Carlo Ancelotti, they have progressed on nine out of nine such instances.

This match will mark Ancelotti's 75th Champions League game in charge of Real Madrid, making him the first coach to reach this milestone with the club, and the seventh coach to do so with any single team.

stadium.

Simeone said the first leg was "very tactical" for a Madrid derby, with both sides cautious in the second half after Brahim Diaz put Madrid 2-1 ahead in the 55th minute.

Rodrygo Goes gave the hosts the lead but Julian Alvarez's fine strike levelled for Atletico in the first half.

"If it was difficult tonight, imagine what it will be like next Wednesday," said Carlo Ancelotti last week, fully aware of the pressure from the stands his side will face.

Simeone's team were cautious at the Bernabeu despite trailing because they believed that with a tight scoreline at the half-way point, they can capitalise at home.

"Our fans push us, they give us energy, they make putting in the effort not difficult, and we need them," said Simeone.

"We are still alive and we may have a good night on Wednesday."

Star Madrid forwards Vinicius Junior and Kylian Mbappe were kept extremely quiet in the first leg but both scored as they beat Rayo Vallecano on Sunday in LaLiga to pull level with leaders Barcelona.

Ancelotti was able to take off some star names, including Mbappe, Rodrygo, and Jude Bellingham, who is back from suspension and set to start for Madrid.

Atletico endured a more painful weekend with two late goals consigning them to a 2-1 defeat at Getafe, but Simeone said his team would recover in time to face Madrid.

"The players feel bad because we played a bad match," admitted the Argentine.

"We have to try to be strong, united, with the hope of improving our game, and we can't imagine anything else."

BCB hopes WDPL prepares team for WC qualifiers

SPORTS REPORTER

Nigar Sultana Joty-led Sheltech Cricket Club secured the Women's Dhaka Premier League (WDPL) title on Monday with a game in hand, having picked up seven straight wins.

But this year's edition of the WDPL has been more than just about deciding which is the best 50-over women's outfit in Dhaka's club scene as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is hoping the tournament will help the national team get ready for the ODI World Cup qualifiers in April.

The WDPL is usually held later in the year but the BCB preponed it this year ahead of the qualifying matches, a move the BCB women's wing chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim commended.

"The Women's Premier League is going on and it's very important for this year because right after this the team will head to Pakistan for World Cup qualification tournament where there are teams such as West Indies and Sri Lanka," Fahim said in a BCB video message.

"Only two teams would qualify for the next 50-over World Cup and

so this league is very important in terms of preparation. I think the tournament this time was well organised because it was played at the right time. Usually it is played between May-June during high temperatures when the wicket is not very good," he added.



While established national team players like Farzana Haque Pinky and Sharmin Supta are leading the run-scoring charts, their strike rates are stuck in the 70-75 region while youngster Shorna Akter amassed 277 runs at a strike rate of 112, which is the kind of impact that

BCB is searching for. Fahim recognised that strike-rate has been an issue in women's cricket over the years and also spoke about how the team often struggle when key players like Joty misfire.

"We have seen that the team is dependent on one or two individuals. We can talk about Nigar Sultana Joty and there have been sporadic performances from some players.

"In this year's league, we have found players we can depend upon, who have consistently scored runs. At the same time, a players' strike rate is also very important."

The Tigresses missed out on direct qualification following the 2-1 defeat in the West Indies series in January. As Sheltech lift the trophy today after their final game against Bashundhara Sports City at BKSP, the focus will shift to the qualifiers.

"After the league, the players will have a short camp which will take place on either side of Eid and then the team will depart for Pakistan. We are hoping that the team will qualify for the World Cup," Fahim added.



Bangladesh women's kabaddi team members pose with their medals during a reception at the NSC Conference Room yesterday following their bronze-medal win at the recent 6th Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship in Iran. Captained by Sraboni Mallick and coached by Maleka Parvin, Bangladesh finished with a first-ever bronze medal after making it to the semifinals. Youth and Sports secretary Rezaul Maksud Jahedi, on behalf of the Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojil Bhuiyan, declared a Tk 25 lakh grant for the team's training during the event, which was also attended among others, by Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation's general secretary SM Newaz Shohag.

PHOTO: BKF



Best Brand Award
Winner Every Year

Bangladesh air second worst in the world

IQAir says Dhaka third most polluted capital



STAR REPORT

Bangladesh was the world's second most polluted country in 2024, with average smog levels exceeding World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines by more than 15 times, according to data compiled by Swiss air quality monitoring firm IQAir.

With an average PM2.5 level of 78 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), Bangladesh had the worst air quality in the world, second only to Chad (128 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). It was followed

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Without getting treatment, a female patient along with her attendants returning home from the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital yesterday. Outdoor treatment at the healthcare facility stopped as interns demonstrated to press home their five-point demand, including immediate recruitment of 10,000 doctors.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

PROTECTING WOMEN, CHILDREN

Fulfil your promises fast

Int'l NGOs urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International NGOs operating in Bangladesh, including ActionAid, Oxfam, Plan International, and Save the Children, have expressed serious concern over the recent surge in incidents of rape, sexual harassment, and violence against women, girls, and children across the country.

In a joint statement, the organisations have called for urgent action to ensure justice, protection, and the safeguarding of human rights of survivors and their families.

While welcoming the government's recent commitment to a "zero tolerance" policy towards violence against women and children, the organisations have urged the authorities to swiftly fulfil their promises, including completing investigations within 15 days and ensuring that trials are concluded within 90 days of the incident.

The NGOs called for the immediate implementation of these commitments and other relevant policies to combat violence.

These calls came in response to nationwide protests led by women, girls, students, teachers, activists, and rights-based organisations. The international NGOs have expressed solidarity with these demonstrators, who have played a key role in demanding greater accountability and justice.

The statement referenced recent data from Ain o Salish Kendra, which reveals an alarming trend in 2025, with 294 women and children subjected to violence in the first two months of the year, including 96 cases of rape, 44 of which involved minors.

Additionally, there has been a disturbing rise in moral policing, mob violence, and the misinterpretation of 'gender justice'. This growing trend of victim-blaming has discouraged survivors from seeking justice, while further

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

MAGURA RAPE Condition of 8-yr-old deteriorates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The condition of the eight-year old rape victim from Magura worsened further with doctors saying that her brain has become "unresponsive".

A member of the medical board overseeing her treatment at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka said that the girl's condition improved slightly on Monday.

"But her condition took a drastic turn, leaving her brain become unresponsive," the board member told Bangla daily Prothom Alo.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, a maternal uncle of the victim said, "The doctors have informed us that her condition is not good.

"They are trying their best but the condition is deteriorating..."

On Saturday, the victim's mother filed a case with Magura Sadar Police Station against four people -- the victim's sister's father-in-law and mother-in-law and two brothers-in-law.

The police have arrested

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Ukraine, US start partial truce talks in Jeddah

Kyiv fires largest drone barrage at Russia; EU chief calls for defence 'surge', says 'time of illusions' over

AGENCIES

Ukraine said talks with the United States in Saudi Arabia began "very constructively" yesterday, with a partial ceasefire with Russia on the table hours after Kyiv conducted its largest drone attack on Moscow in three years of war.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga attended the meeting in Jeddah -- which Russia was not participating in -- as President Donald Trump ramped up pressure on Ukraine to end the war that began with Russia's 2022 invasion.

The talks come just days after President Volodymyr Zelensky's public dressing-down at the White House, after which the United States cut off military aid, intelligence sharing and access to satellite imagery.

Ukraine is hoping the offer of a partial ceasefire in the sky and at sea will persuade Washington to restore the assistance.

"We are ready to do everything to achieve peace," Ukrainian presidency chief of staff Andriy Yermak told reporters as he entered the meeting at a luxury hotel.

Meanwhile, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen

yesterday called for a "surge" in European defence spending, as the 27-nation bloc faces an aggressive Russia and faltering US support.

Addressing lawmakers in Strasbourg, von der Leyen said Europe's security order was "being shaken," suggesting the continent could no longer rely on "America's full protection".

"The time of illusions is now over. Europe is called to take greater charge of its own defence," the European Commission president told the EU's parliament.

"We need a surge in European defence. And we need it now."

In Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron was set to address a meeting of military chiefs from 30 European and Nato countries willing to contribute to security guarantees for Ukraine after any negotiated truce with Russia.

Macron, who has sought to rally a European response to Washington's shock policy shift in US-Russia relations, has said yesterday's meeting will be held in coordination with Nato military command.

After yesterday's talks, defence ministers from Europe's five main military powers -- France, Britain, Germany, Italy and Poland --

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

► 4 killed as hundreds of drones slam into Moscow and other areas overnight

► Russia's army said it intercepted 337 drones across the country

► Macron to address military chiefs from 30 countries on Ukraine

► China hopes for 'just and lasting solution' in Ukraine

Govt reinstates Ziaur Rahman's Swadhinata Padak
Publishes names of 7 awardees of this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has reinstated the Swadhinata Padak (Independence Award) posthumously given to president Ziaur Rahman in 2003, reversing its 2016 decision to cancel the honour.

In 2016, the Awami League government revoked the BNP founder's award, citing a

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Minimum fitra fixed at Tk 110 per person

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The minimum Fitra for this year has been fixed at Tk 110 per person, while the maximum at Tk 2,805.

The decision was made yesterday at a meeting of the National Sadaqat Fitra Determination Committee at the Islamic Foundation's conference

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Four children, a woman raped

STAR REPORT

Four more children, including a mentally challenged girl, and a woman have been raped in Khulna, Chattogram, Savar, Bandarban, and Jamalpur.

Quoting a case statement, police said Mofiz Sheikh, 40, of Khulna's Terokhada upazila, raped a 31-year old woman

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Fifth AL leader dies in Bogura jail custody

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Another Awami League leader has died under the custody of Bogura District Jail. Prior to this, four AL leaders had died in the same jail custody since the July uprising.

The deceased, Emdadul Haque Bhutto, 51, was the organising

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Duterte held for crimes against humanity

AFP, Manila

Former Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte boarded a flight bound for The Hague yesterday night, his lawyer said, following his arrest on an International Criminal Court warrant tied to his deadly war on drugs.

The 79-year-old faces a charge of "the crime against humanity of murder", according to the ICC, for a crackdown that rights groups estimate killed tens of thousands of mostly poor men, often without proof they were linked to drugs.

As of 9:00pm (1300 GMT), the former president had been placed aboard an aircraft bound for The Hague, according to one of his lawyers.

Martin Delgra told a group chat open to journalists on messaging app Viber that Duterte had boarded the plane at Manila's Villamor Air Base with three others at about 9:00pm (1300 GMT), adding: "We cannot go near the plane. Plane still on tarmac with door open."

Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte had earlier said her father was being "forcibly taken to The Hague tonight".

"This is not justice -- this is oppression and persecution," Duterte's eldest daughter said in a statement.

A photo posted by Delgra to the same group chat showed the plane's tail number as RP-C5219.

While flight tracking site FlightRadar.com had no

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Rickshaws waiting for passengers occupy almost the entire road near Holy Cross College in the capital's Farmgate area. It causes severe inconvenience to vehicular movement. The photo was taken around noon yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Complicity in Rohingya genocide cannot go unpunished

P9

Prime Bank ISLAMIC BANK

PRAYER TIMING MARCH 12

Fazr Zohr Asr Magrib Esha

AZAN 4:55 12:45 4:30 6:07 7:30

JAMAT 5:05 1:15 4:45 6:22 8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN | MARCH | SEHRI | IFTAR

11 12 4:54 6:07

12 13 4:53 6:07

13 14 4:52 6:08