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## ABRAR MURDER

## HC upholds gallows for 20 Buet students

Confirms life term for 5 in the 2019 brutal killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday upheld a trial court verdict sentencing 20 Buet students to death and five others to life in prison for killing Abrar Fahad in 2019.

Abrar, a student of electrical and electronics engineering at Buet, was beaten to death by the leaders and activists of the now banned Chhatra League at a dormitory of the university in October 2019 in an incident that shook the nation to its core.

A Dhaka court on December 8, 2021, delivered verdict in the case.

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice AKM Asaduzzaman and Justice Syed Enayet Hossain accepted the death reference (trial court documents for confirmation of death sentences) and dismissed the appeals filed by the convicts.

Citing the documents, the HC said the accused in connivance with each other killed Abrar, and nobody stepped forward to save him.

The detailed observations on which the



HC came up with the verdict will be known when its full text is released, Deputy Attorney General Jashim Sarker told The Daily Star.

After the HC delivered the verdict, Abrar's father Barkat Ullah told reporters on the Supreme Court premises that he hoped the verdict would be implemented without any delay.

"Parents send their children to educational institutions and work hard so that the children have education. However, when children go astray, giving in to temptation, parents are deeply hurt. I urge the students not to engage in bad politics," he said.

Abrar's younger brother Abrar Faiyaz said, "We did not think even a year ago that the High Court verdict would be delivered so soon. It may have been possible because of the changeover on August 5 last year. However, there is still a lot to be done."

If the verdicts are implemented fast, it will act as a deterrent, he said, adding,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Dockyards have been illegally built by occupying the Buriganga bank in Char Kaliganj area of Dakkhin Keraniganj. Constructing anything beyond the pillar, marked in red, is illegal.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## 'Rape is rape'

Says CA's office; TIB calls DMP chief's remarks on rape 'arrogant'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Adviser's Office yesterday condemned the DMP commissioner's call on the media not to use the term "rape" in their reporting.

"Rape is rape, whether committed against an 8-year-old or an 80-year-old. Such a heinous crime must be called by its rightful name," said a statement issued by the CA Press Wing.

The interim government will not tolerate any form of violence against any citizen of Bangladesh, added the statement.

On Saturday, DMP chief Sheikh Md Sajat Ali told a programme, "I strongly dislike the word 'rape'. I request you [media] not to use it. Instead, use terms like 'violence against women' or 'repression of women'. Even the law is called the 'Women and Children Repression [Prevention] Act.' Let's avoid words that sound unpleasant."

Reacting to his remark yesterday, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said that by requesting the media to refrain from using the word "rape," the DMP commissioner has essentially taken the side of rapists and created a means to protect them.

"If a police official makes such a

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## Highway Police struggling amid resource crunch

SHARIFUL ISLAM and MUNTAKIM SAAD

The special police unit, which was established nearly two decades ago to ensure safety and security on the highways, continues to struggle to prevent robberies and other crimes.

Highway Police officials cited insufficient manpower, inadequate logistics support, and the absence of a modern, technology-driven policing system as key factors behind the unit's struggles.

Although the officials could not immediately say how many robberies on the highways took place in recent months, data from the Police Headquarters showed the number of robbery cases in general was 171 in January and 153 in February this year, compared to 114 and 121 in the same months last year.

In recent months, armed gangs ambushing buses, trucks, and private vehicles have made headlines very often. News reports show regional roads are particularly vulnerable after dark.

Returning expatriates, businessmen, and goods-laden trucks are among the most frequent targets. Many victims

refrain from filing cases due to the legal hassles and a lack of confidence in law enforcement. They opt for general diaries that often lead to no action.

The most shocking incident took place on February 17, when a gang took charge of a Rajshahi-bound bus from Dhaka near Mirzapur in Tangail. They assaulted passengers before fleeing

**We have 90 vehicles and around 3,000 members, but we need at least 250 vehicles and 6,000 officers**  
Shafiqul Islam, DIG

with cash, mobile phones, and jewellery.

On February 21, armed criminals

robbed passengers and drivers on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway, taking jewellery, cash, and mobile phones.

In another incident on February 23, robbers blocked a highway in Patnitola,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

## Trump freezes VOA and other US-funded media outlets

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump's administration has put journalists at Voice of America and other US-funded broadcasters on leave, abruptly freezing decades-old outlets long seen as critical to countering Russian and Chinese information offensives.

Hundreds of staffers at VOA, Radio Free Asia, Radio Free Europe and other outlets received a weekend email saying they will be barred from their offices and should surrender press passes and office-issued equipment.

Trump, who has already eviscerated the US global aid agency and the Education Department, on Friday issued an executive order listing the US Agency for Global Media as among "elements of the federal bureaucracy that the president has determined are unnecessary."

Kari Lake, a firebrand Trump supporter put in charge of the media agency after she lost a US Senate bid, said in an email to the outlets that federal grant money "no longer effectuates agency priorities."

The White House said the cuts would

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



Several demonstrators assault a pedestrian who asked them to clear Kamarbari Road near Farmgate in the capital. The protesters kept the road blocked for almost an hour yesterday afternoon, demanding the removal of agriculture secretary because of what they say is rehabilitation of pro-Awami League officials by him.

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## Next budget must be designed for LDC graduation

Says CPD, wants tax policy revision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country must revise its tax policies to align with World Trade Organisation regulations as part of its preparations for graduation from the least-developed country bracket in November 2026, said the Centre for Policy Dialogue yesterday.

One of the most immediate challenges will be the elimination of direct export incentives, said Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at CPD, at a press briefing organised to share recommendations for the upcoming fiscal year.

Currently, the government provides cash incentives ranging from 3 percent to 4 percent for garments and up to 20 percent for agricultural exports.

Under WTO regulations, such subsidies will no longer be allowed for developing nations, raising concerns about the competitiveness of Bangladeshi products in global markets.

To support exporters, Bangladesh must replace cash incentives with alternative WTO compliant measures, the CPD said.

Rahman emphasised the need for a long-term strategy.

"Our focus should shift from market-access dependent competitiveness to skills- and productivity-based competitiveness. We still have some time – three more years in the European market. Canada and China have also assured us of continued trade benefits for a period. We must maximise this transition period," he said.

Beyond tariff reforms, Bangladesh must also revise its agricultural trade policies to meet the WTO standards.

Post-graduation, the country will be required to submit annual notifications on domestic agricultural support measures, a shift from

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5

## AID TO RAKHINE Dhaka should weigh all options carefully

Experts say as many questions remain unanswered

PORIMOL PALMA

Dhaka needs to carefully consider the geopolitical and security implications before agreeing to a humanitarian corridor to Myanmar, which was discussed during the UN secretary-general's Bangladesh visit, say foreign policy and security analysts.

Antonio Guterres, who left Dhaka yesterday for New York after a four-day visit, on Saturday told media he discussed with Bangladesh authorities the possibilities of channelling humanitarian aid inside Myanmar via Bangladesh as a means of creating conditions for Rohingya repatriation to Rakhine State.

He admitted it would, however, require the "authorisation and the cooperation of the parties to the conflict".

A day before the UN chief's visit, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam in a Facebook post said in the light of the dire humanitarian situation in Rakhine, Bangladesh would positively consider supporting UN-led humanitarian assistance to the state.

Analysts say that establishing the corridor being discussed between the UN and Bangladesh is not easy at all, as it involves numerous geopolitical, security, and

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

## Dhaka Central University for 7 colleges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

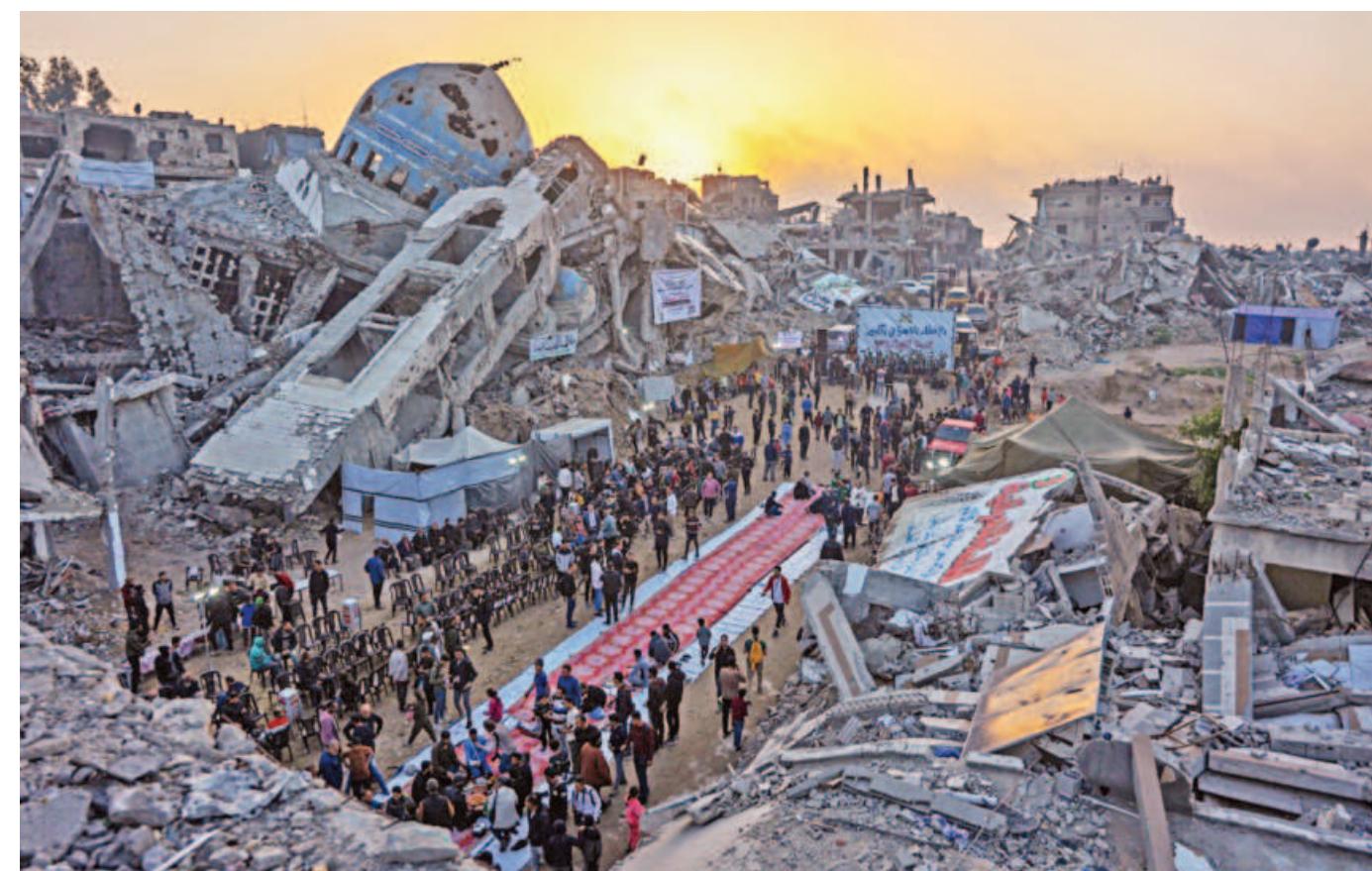
The newly proposed university comprising seven government colleges in the capital will be called the Dhaka Central University.

The seven colleges involved in the new university are Dhaka College, Government Bangla College, Government Titumir College, Eden Mohila College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Government Shahid Suhrawardy College, and Begum Badrunnesa Government Girls' College. The colleges currently serve about 2 lakh students in both graduate and postgraduate programmes.

The decision was made yesterday at a meeting held at the University Grants Commission (UGC) with a delegation of 28 student leaders, said Abul Kalam Azad Majumder, the deputy press secretary to the chief adviser, at a press briefing yesterday.

Regarding the university's interim administration, a proposal has already been prepared and sent to the University of Dhaka (DU) authorities via the education ministry.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Palestinians gather for a mass fast-breaking iftar meal in front of the destroyed Salim Abu Muslim mosque in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, during the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan. Israel and Hamas are set for more indirect talks yesterday on the Gaza ceasefire, but deep divisions persist between the two warring sides on the terms of the fragile truce. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Correction

In our story titled "The Disappeared of the July Uprising: Families Want Closure, However Painful" published on March 16, 2025, we ran a photo of Iftikharuzzaman, a college student from Bogura, and said he remains unaccounted for since August. He had indeed remained missing for a few days at the time, but has since returned home. We apologise for failing to provide the updated information.



## 'Rape is rape'

FROM PAGE 1 statement, it reflects the institutional culture and practices. This is shocking, and we must express our outrage," Iftikharuzzaman said at a human chain in front of Parliament yesterday.

TIB organised the programme to protest violence against women and children.

Iftikharuzzaman rejected the DMP chief's comments and termed those "arrogant" and "unacceptable," especially from a law enforcement official.

He called for the media to reject the commissioner's position and to amplify coverage of rape incidents to ensure that the issue remains in public attention. "We must continue to draw attention to the horrific reality of rape, not suppress it."

Reflecting on the state of women's rights in Bangladesh, he said, "In 54 years of independence, men have largely enjoyed freedom, but women have not truly experienced it. If women were truly free, they would not continue to suffer from rape and violence."

Iftikharuzzaman also urged the government not to implement legal reforms on rape cases unilaterally, but to involve civil society organisations in the process to ensure the law is effective in protecting women and children.

Also speaking at the programme, Laki Akter, of Nogorik Uddyog, said that punishment for perpetrators must be severe enough to deter future offences. "The punishment must instill fear in future offenders."

Mohuya Leya Falia, of the Manusher Jonno Foundation, criticised the culture of disrespect towards women, pointing to the prevalence of harmful social media content and religious sermons that perpetuate misogyny.

"These must be stopped," she said, urging the government to take immediate action to eliminate all forms of sexual violence.

Mohuya also said that no reforms will succeed if women continue to feel unsafe. "Political parties must demonstrate what measures they are taking to protect women's rights."

Shamsun Huda, executive director of the Association for Land Reform and Development, called for a redefinition of rape and sexual abuse, stressing that women face insecurity across all areas of life—whether at school, work, or in public spaces. "Women are subjected to sexual assault even in the presence of many men. We live in a barbaric society, and it is shameful."

Shamsul also emphasised the need for reforms in the justice system, urging the expansion of the definition of sexual harassment and abuse, which should also include harmful discussions and misogynistic content on media platforms.

Over a hundred participants from various rights organisations attended the human chain, demanding justice for all incidents of violence against women and children and calling for an end to the culture of impunity.

## Highway Police struggling

FROM PAGE 1

Naogaon, with logs and attacked a BRTC bus and a microbus, stealing Tk 3 lakh in cash and valuables. A gang looted cash and mobile phones from teachers and students on an educational trip in Tangail's Ghatal upazila on February 25.

On March 1, robbers attacked a microbus carrying a Bangladeshi expatriate in Pabna's Santia upazila, injuring three people and looting valuables. A day later, a moving bus near Savar's Bank Town area was ambushed in broad daylight by armed robbers.

In response to these incidents, police have prepared a list of 1,446 suspects, including individuals who have been formally charged or convicted in past highway robbery cases.

Md Shafiqul Islam, deputy inspector general (operations) of Highway Police, told The Daily Star that the force had already sent the list to the Police Headquarters with a request to launch a coordinated drive by district police and other units concerned.

### UNDERSTAFFED, ILL-EQUIPPED

With its headquarters operating from a rented house in Uttara, the unit faces an acute shortage of vehicles, leading to heavy reliance on patrolling on foot or requisitioned vehicles.

It had around 99 patrol vehicles and only 2,931 personnel for over 3,000 kilometres of highways across

Bangladesh—an average of one vehicle per 30 kilometres.

Of the original 99 patrol vehicles, nine were torched during the July uprising, leaving even fewer resources to maintain order.

The Highway Police operates under four regions, nine zones, 36 police stations, 37 outposts, and seven camps.

Alarmingly, nine police stations or outposts do not have a single patrol vehicle, forcing officers to rent human haulers to conduct their duties.

One official from the Bogura region, wishing anonymity, revealed that Haikumrul Highway Police Station has only two patrol vehicles to cover an 88-kilometre stretch across three major highways.

With limited resources, officers struggle to cover high-risk crime zones, leaving vast areas completely unguarded. In some instances, the lone ambulance designated for accident rescue is repurposed for patrolling.

To improve highway security, DIG Shafiqul stressed the need for each police station and outpost to have at least four patrol vehicles.

"We have 90 vehicles and around 3,000 members, but we need at least 250 vehicles and 6,000 officers," he said.

The DIG said that although reports of highway robberies waned in the first half of Ramadan, 700 additional policemen would be deployed on deputation ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr

## Dhaka should weigh all options carefully

FROM PAGE 1

diplomatic implications, given that global and regional powers have significant stakes in the region.

They say Bangladesh has been a victim of Myanmar's policy on the Rohingya, who fled in their hundreds of thousands since the 1980s.

Though many of them had returned to Myanmar earlier, there was no repatriation at all since the largest influx in 2017 when around 750,000 of them fled to Cox's Bazar.

With the deterioration of security and economic situation amid the conflicts between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army rebel group, about one lakh more have fled since July last year.

According to a UNDP report published in November last year, there is a famine-like situation in Rakhine State, most of what is now being controlled by the Arakan Army, though they could not take control of the sea and airport yet.

Bangladesh's sole intention is to have the Rohingya repatriated, but ensure humanitarian support before it. That also has become challenging with the World Food Programme reducing food aid.

Dr Imtiaz Ahmed, former professor of Dhaka University's International Relations Department, said the UN

secretary general or even the UN General Assembly cannot go ahead with such a humanitarian corridor if the UN Security Council does not approve it.

Former Bangladesh ambassador to China, Munshi Faiz Ahmad, said if humanitarian assistance is transported to Rakhine through a corridor, there can be an opportunity for the Rohingya to go back to Rakhine, instead of staying in Bangladeshi camps.

"We have been talking about a safe zone within Rakhine. Eventually, that can happen," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

This can be done under the UN supervision. Such an arrangement can also help bring more aid, he said.

"However, the control of the corridor's Bangladesh part has to be under Dhaka's authority. If any issue arises, Bangladesh should have the authority to seal the corridor," Munshi Faiz said.

Also, the UN has to guarantee that there will be sufficient aid, he added.

"Nothing is clear yet about the proposed humanitarian corridor. We need to have a thorough discussion about it before we agree," he said.

Bangladesh needs to carefully weigh the pros and cons", the security analyst said.

The DMCH register lists Sub-Inspector

Mahfuz of the DB police as the officer who admitted Ezaz.

However, DB chief Rezaul Karim Mallick denied that Ezaz died in their custody.

"A team detained him at a city hospital. As he was sick, we immediately took him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where he died. We did not take him into our custody," said Rezaul, an additional commissioner (Detective Branch) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, on Saturday.

Shafiqur Rahman, inspector (investigation) of Mohammadpur Police Station, said Ezaz was wanted in a murder case.

The Inter Services Public Relations Directorate (ISPR) said on Saturday, "This is not our issue. He was detained by the army long ago, handed over to the police,

to maintain law and order on the highways during the holiday travel rush.

He also said 39 people allegedly involved in highway robberies were arrested after the recent incidents.

A shortage of firearms and ammunition has further weakened the force. During last year's student-led mass uprising, several Highway Police establishments were attacked and torched, while 33 firearms and over 11,000 rounds of ammunition were looted. Among the looted arms, 10 are 7.62mm rifles, one submachine gun, nine 9mm pistols, 10 shotguns, and three gas guns.

The challenges extend beyond manpower, vehicles and firearms.

The design of highways, particularly on four-lane and eight-lane sections, makes it difficult for officers to respond quickly to incidents on the opposite side. Delayed response times only embolden criminals.

Furthermore, the force's wireless communication system has a range of just two kilometres, severely hindering coordination among units.

To ensure road safety, DIG Shafiqul called for access to the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) database, which he said would help track offenders more effectively.

"If a driver violates traffic rules, the owner may receive an automated SMS alert, and BRTA may collect the fines during document renewal," he said.

## Dhaka should weigh all options carefully

community to step up aid may help attract new funding, but the discussion on channelling humanitarian aid to Myanmar through Bangladesh has triggered concerns.

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The suspect was undergoing treatment at a hospital, from where a DB team detained him, he told this paper.

A local trader alleged that Ezaz was closely associated with top criminal Emon and engaged in various criminal activities.

Refuting the claims, Shah Alam accused law enforcement of falsely labelling him a criminal and subjecting him to torture, which led to his death.

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## Lax monitoring lets industrial waste pollute waterbodies

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Discharge of untreated and potentially hazardous industrial waste from dyeing and printing units of mills and factories in Tangail has long been indiscriminately polluting the rivers and other waterbodies across the district amid lax monitoring by the authorities concerned.

Lives and livelihoods of local people, as well as the aquatic biodiversity have been severely affected adversely due to pollution of these waterbodies over the years.

According to sources at the Department of Environment in Tangail, there are more than 15 mills and factories in Mirzapur upazila alone, including Gorai Industrial Area, as well as two mills in BSCIC Industrial area and adjacent Khudirampur under Sadar upazila.

The mills and factories have Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs), the sources said.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw that the water of Sohagpara and Pakulla canals in Mirzapur upazila has turned pitch black due to pollution caused by discharge of untreated waste from the adjacent mills and factories.

Locals alleged that most of the industries have yet to install ETPs following rules and as per capacity, while those that have ETPs installed keep those non-operational to minimize costs. As such, all these mills and factories

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PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Locals catch crabs from Dhaki River near the Sundarbans. Many residents of villages near the mangrove forest rely on catching fish and crabs to make a living. During low tide, they catch crabs, with an average daily catch of 5-7kg. Depending on size, they sell each kilogramme for Tk 200-800 in the local market. The photo was taken from Dakop upazila, Khulna yesterday.

## ACC sues Inu, SK Sur

Starts probe against Sheikh Selim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

ACC has filed separate cases against former information minister Hasanul Haque Inu and his wife and former lawmaker Afroz Haque, former deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank Sitangshu Kumar Sur Chowdhury, his wife Suparna Sur Chowdhury and daughter Nandita Sur Chowdhury.

The anti-graft body also launched an investigation against former health minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim over allegations of taking 10-15 percent commissions from contractors in different projects across the country.

ACC Director General Akhtar Hossain confirmed the developments at the commission's headquarters in Dhaka's Segunbagicha yesterday.

Inu and Afroz were accused of acquiring illegal wealth worth Tk 4.84 crore and Tk 1.50 crore respectively. Additionally, Inu allegedly conducted suspicious transactions worth Tk 11.88 crore from his four bank accounts.

ACC also filed three separate cases against SK Sur, his wife and daughter over abusing power, acquiring wealth illegally and conducting suspicious bank transactions.

## Turning rodents into revenue

Homemaker finds success in albino rat farming

JAHID HASAN, Shariatpur

Laboni Akter, a resident of Dhaka's Khilgaon, after completing her post-graduation in Zoology from Khilgaon Model College, sought a unique venture to achieve financial solvency.

For around a year, she has been raising albino rats of a foreign breed in Tulashar village of Shariatpur Sadar upazila.

When asked what motivated her to set up a farm of albino rats, which is reportedly the first of its kind in the country, Laboni said these rats are essential for research purposes.

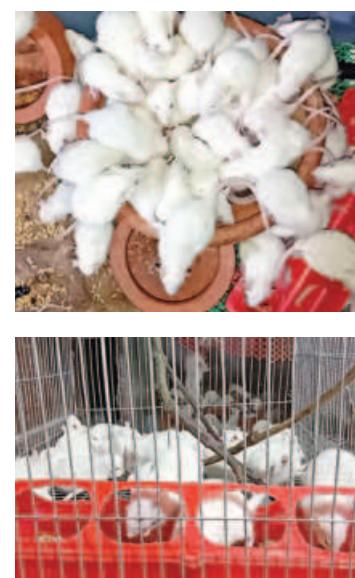
Different laboratories and university students require foreign albino rats for research, which are not easily available in Bangladesh. As a zoology graduate, I knew it is relatively easy to breed and rear rats.

**CHANGE MAKER**

So, this sparked the idea of starting a rat farm," she explained.

A homemaker and mother of two, Laboni launched her farm in July 2024 with an initial investment of Tk 1,500 in Shariatpur, from where her husband Md Rakib hailed.

Her husband provided her the initial investment and purchased four Swiss albino rats, a popular breed from Switzerland, for Tk



1,000 and two cages for Tk 500.

Even though she had no formal training in rat farming, Laboni began learning on her own from Google and YouTube about how to ensure the ideal environment, provide the right diet, and treat illnesses for the rats.

By October, the rats had their first litter of ten babies. Currently, she has 40 parent rats that produce about 200 babies every month, which she primarily sells to laboratories and other farms.

At present, her farm has around 350 rats, including parent stock and litter.

She sells 200 baby rats at Tk 100 each monthly, generating around Tk 20,000, making a net

profit of Tk 15,000 per month.

"My first buyer was a snake breeder from Narayanganj. I sold 20 baby rats at Tk 50 each," Laboni said.

However, since she has been selling the rats through middlemen, it reduces her profit. These middlemen buy the rats from her at Tk 100 each and later sell those for Tk 200-250 each to the laboratories.

Laboni aspires to expand her farm by establishing direct contracts with research laboratories and universities to eliminate middlemen and sell at fair prices.

She also wants to encourage more women in Shariatpur to engage in different

entrepreneurial ventures with minimal investment and achieve financial solvency.

Laboni believes that if she could have training on rat farming, alongside support and dedicated land, it could help her expand her venture and create employment opportunities for other women.

"My husband and mother-in-law have been my biggest support in this journey," she said.

Contacted, Ilora Yasmin, upazila nibabhi officer of Shariatpur Sadar upazila, lauded Laboni's initiative.

"Her initiative is undoubtedly remarkable. If Laboni approaches us, we will provide her with all possible support," she said.

## Five sent to jail

FROM PAGE 3

In Noakhali, a 55-year-old man was sent to jail for raping his daughter-in-law at Companyganj upazila on March 13.

The victim filed a case yesterday and police arrested the accused on the same night, said Gazi Muhammad Fouzul Azim, OC of Companyganj Police Station.

In Narsingdi, one Azad Miah, 30, of Belabo upazila, was arrested in a case filed for raping a 30-year-old RMG worker on Friday, said Nasir Uddin, inspector (investigation) of Belabo Police Station.

In Lalmonirhat, Meher Ali, 55, from Sadar upazila, was sent to jail on charges of attempting to rape a

third grader, said police.

In Patuakhali, mother of a 10th grader girl demanded immediate arrest of a group of stalkers, who harassed the girl and beat her brother on March 10, at a press conference.

**MAN ACCUSED OF RAPING NIECE**

In Lalmonirhat, a 5-year-old girl was allegedly raped by one of her uncles in Hatibandha upazila yesterday, said police.

Hatibandha Police Station OC Mahmudun Nabi said they are trying to arrest the accused.

The girl was undergoing treatment, said doctors.

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

## Four more parties

FROM PAGE 3

Earlier, by March 13, seven political parties had submitted their feedback, while 16 political parties have requested additional time to submit their responses.

Meanwhile, 11 political parties have yet to contact the commission regarding their feedback.

The reform proposals in question stem from the Constitutional Reform Commission, Public Administration Reform Commission, Electoral System Reform Commission, Judicial Reform Commission,

and Anti-Corruption Commission.

These proposals were compiled into spreadsheets and sent to 38 political parties with a request to submit their feedback.

The National Consensus Commission was formed under the leadership of the Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

The commission officially began its operations on February 15 and has since been engaging with political parties to gather opinions on the proposed reforms.

## Join Shahjalal Islami Bank as MANAGEMENT TRAINEE OFFICER | PROBATIONARY OFFICER

Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC., a leading progressive Shariah based private commercial bank having 141 branches across the country with state of the art technology providing fully online services to the customers. The Management of Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC. is comprised of a team of highly motivated personnel committed to develop excellence in banking. We offer high-caliber graduates the opportunity to develop career as Management Trainee Officer (MTO) under Future Leadership Program.

To meet the growing need of the expansion program the Bank is inviting applications from the talented, proactive and hardworking fresh graduates with strong academic background for induction in the Bank as Management Trainee Officer (MTO) and Probationary Officer (PO) who fulfill the following criteria:

### Educational Qualifications:

- Post Graduate from a highly reputed UGC approved University with following grades/results.

Education Level	Management Trainee Officer	Probationary Officer
SSC/O-Level, HSC/A-Level, or Equivalents	CGPA 4.75 out of 5.00 and Minimum 4A & 1B in O-Level and Minimum 1A & 1B in A-Level	CGPA 4.50 out of 5.00 and Minimum 3A & 2B in O-Level and Minimum 2B in A-Level
Graduation & Post-Graduation or Equivalents	CGPA 3.25 out of 4.00 and CGPA 4.00 out of 5.00/First Class.	CGPA 3.00 out of 4.00 and CGPA 4.00 out of 5.00/First Class.

### Job Requirements:

- Ideal candidate should be self-motivated, conversant with MS Office and must have willingness to work anywhere in the country;
- Age not over 32 years as on March 16, 2025

### Selection Procedure:

The selection process will be purely on merit basis. The candidates shall go through a comprehensive selection process which includes initial shortlisting strictly based on the eligibility criteria, written test and two phase interviews. Selected candidates shall go through a formal and structured training process comprising of both classroom and on the job practical training.

### Compensation Package:

We offer a great career for the performers with excellent pay package. Selected MTOs and POs shall remain on probation for a period of 1 (one) year. The positions will have the following pay package.

On Probation		After successful completion of probation period	
Position	Monthly Consolidated Pay	To be confirmed as	Monthly Gross Salary
MTO	Tk 49,500.00	First Executive Officer	Tk 71,500.00
PO	Tk 38,500.00	Assistant Executive Officer	Tk 52,955.00

### Placement Policy:

Selected candidates must serve in any Branch/Office of the Bank. The MTOs will be nurtured as future leaders of the Bank placing in different key business areas/Corporate Branches/Offices. While the Probationary Officers will be placed outside the city branches of Dhaka and Chattogram. Candidates not willing to serve outside Dhaka/Chattogram need not to apply.

### Commitment to serve:

We want your commitment to serve Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC. for a period of minimum 5 (five) years (by signing a surety bond) to reciprocate to our investment in your career.

### Application Procedure:

Shahjalal Islami Bank provides an equal employment opportunity. If you fulfill the criteria and have a desire to grow in banking career with a strong willingness to take up the challenge, please apply online through <http://www.bdjobs.com/sjibl> with a recently snapped photograph by April 7, 2025 where one candidate can apply for one position only.

No hardcopy of any application/resume will be entertained. Only short listed candidates will be allowed to sit for written examination.

The Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any application without assigning any reason whatsoever at any stage of the recruitment process.



**Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC.**  
Committed to Cordial Service



Shahjalal Islami Bank Tower

## AR Rahman recuperates after brief hospitalisation

Last Saturday, Oscar-winning music composer AR Rahman was admitted to Apollo Hospital in Chennai. However, AR Ameen, his son, provided an update, while the hospital issued a press release confirming that Rahman was discharged yesterday.

The musician returned from London on Saturday and started feeling unwell, prompting him to seek a check-up. Rahman was admitted to the hospital, where he received an ECG and echocardiogram.

As per ANI, all the tests conducted by doctors showed Rahman's condition to be normal. They stated that Rahman's condition was due to dehydration, probably resulting from fasting during Ramadan.

His team also dismissed "false" reports that suggested he was hospitalised due to chest pain.



## NEWS

### Yunus to discuss law and order

FROM PAGE 12  
the world, reported BSS.

Top Asian leaders and CEOs of leading firms will participate in the conference.

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen called on Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna yesterday to discuss the upcoming tour.

After the meeting with the ambassador, Shafiqul said that the chief adviser was likely to meet CEOs of some companies on the sidelines of the forum.

The Chinese envoy informed Yunus that Chinese companies made larger investments in Bangladesh after the interim government took charge last year.

"We hope that more Chinese companies will come to Bangladesh with their investment after the visit," Shafiqul added.

He said the chief adviser would hold talks with Chinese hospital chains to invite them to explore

business potential and set up hospitals in Bangladesh under joint venture initiatives.

The first bilateral meeting between Prof Yunus and Chinese President Xi Jinping will be held in Beijing on March 28, the press secretary said.

He said that issues related to bilateral interest will be discussed in the meeting.

Bangladesh wants to take its relations with China to a new height aiming to turn Bangladesh into a manufacturing hub, he said, adding, "They [China] think that this would be the most important visit by the Bangladeshi leader."

The government's focus will be on attracting Chinese companies to relocate their factories to Bangladesh, Shafiqul said.

On the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York last year, the chief adviser talked to the Chinese foreign minister and sought Chinese investment in

Bangladesh's solar energy sector.

In response, two Chinese companies, including the world's leading supplier of solar PV solutions Longi, will soon set up their offices and manufacturing plants in Bangladesh, according to Shafiqul.

During the visit, Prof Yunus would deliver a lecture at Peking University, which would confer an honorary doctorate on the chief adviser, said the press secretary.

The chief adviser will also visit the Chinese Hi-Tech parks.

Regarding the government's reform initiatives, Shafiqul said that Bangladesh had the full support of its friendly partners and well-wishers in its reform agenda, but the reform initiatives were completely "homegrown" and they would remain so, reported UNB.

"The reform process is fully homegrown. We are maintaining the highest transparency," he added.

### Dhaka Central University for 7 colleges

FROM PAGE 2  
Once the proposal is approved by the DU Syndicate, the interim administration will be finalised, Majumder said.

The university's administrative structure is nearly complete, and final decisions will soon be made. Initially, the interim administration will be led by one of the principals from the seven colleges.

The UGC has conducted interviews with the seven principals, and one will be selected to head the new university. The respective principal's college will serve as the university's headquarters.

Earlier, on January 27, the DU authorities announced they would sever ties with the seven colleges following

demands from the students.

From the 2024-25 academic year, no new students will be admitted under DU though existing students will continue their studies under DU's administration.

Before the creation of the National University in 1992, the seven colleges were affiliated with DU.

After the National University was established, it took over the responsibility for the colleges and others affiliated with various public universities.

However, in August 2014, then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed the education ministry to re-affiliate the colleges with their respective public

The process of re-affiliation was formally initiated in November 2016, and on February 17, 2017, the seven colleges were re-affiliated with DU.

The aim was to improve education quality, reduce pressure on the National University and eliminate session jams.

However, the re-affiliation led to significant issues such as delays in exam schedules, result publication and administrative inefficiencies, eliciting student protests.

In October 2024, students began calling for the establishment of an independent university for the seven colleges.

### US strikes kill 31 in Yemen

FROM PAGE 12  
Trump also issued a stern warning to the group's main backer.

"To Iran: Support for the Houthi terrorists must end IMMEDIATELY!" he said, adding it would be held "fully accountable" for any continued threats.

The Huthis vowed the strikes "will not pass without response", while Iran's top diplomat Abbas Araghchi condemned the deaths and said Washington had "no authority" to dictate Tehran's foreign policy.

The Huthi Ansarullah website slammed what it called Washington's

"criminal brutality".

US Central Command, which posted videos of fighter jets taking off and a bomb demolishing a compound, said "precision strikes" were launched to "defend American interests, deter enemies, and restore freedom of navigation".

The Huthis' political bureau said its "forces are fully prepared to confront escalation with escalation".

The rebels, who have controlled much of Yemen for more than a decade, are part of the "axis of resistance" of pro-Iran groups

staunly opposed to Israel and the United States.

They have launched scores of drone and missile attacks on ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said the Huthis had "attacked US warships 174 times and commercial vessels 145 times since 2023".

The campaign put a major strain on the vital route, which normally carries about 12 percent of world shipping traffic, forcing many companies to take a costly detour around southern Africa.

### Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 12  
began as a humble activist during his student years. After completing his studies at Islamia College in Calcutta in 1947, he enrolled in law at Dhaka University. However, his involvement in politics ultimately led to his expulsion from the university in 1949. That same year, he was imprisoned twice.

By 1954, he had evolved into an activist politician, driven by his involvement in the formation of the Awami Muslim League in June 1949.

Following Husayn Shaheed Suhrawardy's death in 1963, he revived the Awami League in January 1964. In February 1966, he unveiled the Six-Point Programme for regional autonomy during a conference of Pakistan's opposition parties in Lahore.

In May of that year, he was arrested under the Defence of Pakistan Rules. While in prison, he was charged, in January 1968, with conspiracy to break up Pakistan through what was given out as the Agartala Conspiracy Case.

A mass upsurge forced the withdrawal of the case on February 22, 1969. The next day, at a huge rally at the then Race Course Maidan, Sheikh Mujib was bestowed with the title "Bangabandhu" – the Friend of Bengal.

Bangabandhu led the Awami League to a decisive victory in Pakistan's first general elections in December 1970.

On March 7, 1971 he delivered the historic speech, which united the entire nation for the Liberation War.

As the Pakistan army launched its genocidal crackdown on Bangladeshis on March 25, 1971, Bangabandhu was arrested shortly afterward. He was flown to West Pakistan, where he faced trial on charges of treason.

Pakistan's defeat and the emergence of an independent Bangladesh saw him return home on January 10, 1972.

During his rule, Bangabandhu made several controversial moves, including establishing the Rakkhi Bahini, introducing a one-party rule called Baksal, and banning or closing all but four state-owned national newspapers.

On August 15, 1975, he along with most of his family members was assassinated by a disgruntled group of army men.

Bangabandhu's birthday used to be celebrated as National Children's Day throughout the past Awami League rule. It used to be a public holiday. However, the interim government has cancelled the National Children's Day.

### Tarique promises trials

FROM PAGE 12  
election in the future.

Regardless of which party comes to power, he said there must be a programme, alongside various other activities, to ensure justice for all victims of torture and injustice.

"The trial must be conducted fairly at any costs. If we fail to hold trials for past injustices, and if there is no fair

and proper trial for these incidents, then injustice could happen once again in the country," he warned.

Tarique urged the victim families not to lose hope but to live up to their expectations.

"If we all remain united and vocal against injustice, we will certainly be able to hold these trials in this land," he added.

### Penalise wealthy

FROM PAGE 12

towards direct taxes to alleviate the financial burden on ordinary citizens and for revisiting corporate tax.

The meeting addressed the inflation crisis, emphasising that monetary policies alone are insufficient, and discussed measures including buffer stock scheme and open market operations.

Participants also discussed

enhancing transparency in tax expenditures and integrating them into the monetary framework.

Prominent figures, including CPD Distinguished Fellow Mustafizur Rahman, PRI Chairman Zaidi Sattar, and InM Executive Director Mustafa K Mujeri, contributed to the dialogue, underscoring the need for reforms to fortify the nation's economic foundation.

### Trump freezes VOA

FROM PAGE 1

ensure "taxpayers are no longer on the hook for radical propaganda," marking a dramatic tone shift towards the networks established to extend US influence overseas.

White House press official Harrison Fields wrote "goodbye" on X in 20 languages, a jab at the outlets' multilingual coverage.

VOA director Michael Abramowitz said he was among 1,300 staffers placed on leave Saturday.

"VOA needs thoughtful reform, and we have made progress in that regard. But today's action will leave Voice of America unable to carry out its vital mission," he said on Facebook, noting that its coverage in 48 languages reaches 360 million people each week.

The head of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which started broadcasting into the Soviet bloc during the Cold War, called the cancellation of funding a "massive gift to America's enemies."

"The Iranian ayatollahs, Chinese communist leaders, and autocrats in Moscow and Minsk would celebrate the demise of RFE/RL after 75 years," its president, Stephen Capus, said in a statement.

### Govt seeks

FROM PAGE 12

district magistrate, was constituted for each district with superintendents of police and public prosecutors as members.

Following verification by the field-level district committees, recommendations for withdrawal are being forwarded to the central committee by district magistrates and the Solicitor's Office of the Law and Justice Division.

The press release further stated that this initiative, undertaken jointly by the home and the law ministries, would continue to ensure that no innocent individuals and political activists are subject to harassment.

## 'CHOKKOR 302'

### Mosharraf Karim ready to steal the show this Eid

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

After a prolonged hiatus, Mosharraf Karim is making his return to the silver screen this Eid-ul-Fitr with *Chokkor 302*. Directed by Saraf Ahmed Zibon, the film's teaser has already been released, garnering widespread praise from netizens.

Mosharraf Karim, who takes on the role of police officer Mainul in this thriller, recently spoke to The Daily Star about it. According to him, the narrative of *Chokkor 302* unravels multiple mysteries as the story progresses. "Zibon is one of my favourite people, and his storytelling approach is rather unique," said Mosharraf Karim. "Our promotional video has captivated the audience, and from that, I believe they will definitely come to watch the film in cinemas."

Director Zibon emphasised that the film does not only surround a murder mystery but that it also



delves into the emotional depth of humane relationships. The film, which received a government grant in 2023, was filmed in several locations, including Dhaka, Manikganj, Diyabari, and Sadarghat, among others.

Beyond his long-awaited return to cinema, Mosharraf Karim is particularly excited about the film's release during the festive atmosphere of Eid. "My fans and well-wishers have been waiting for this comeback for so long. That wait will finally be over. I earnestly hope they will enjoy the film," he expressed.

Apart from his established career in theatre and television, Mosharraf Karim made his silver screen debut with *Joyjatra* in 2004.

Over the years, he has delivered several acclaimed performances in films such as *Daruchini Dwip* (2007), *Third Person Singular Number* (2009), *Television* (2012), *Jalaler Golpo* (2014), and *Haldaa* (2017). His Tollywood debut, *Hubba* (2024), received widespread acclaim from both critics and audiences alike.

Along with *Chokkor 302*, Mosharraf Karim also has another film, *Bikdakini*, awaiting release.

## WHAT'S THE HAPS?



### Indigenous Tree Plantation at Panthakunja Park

The Bangladesh Tree Protection Movement (BTPM) is hosting a 10-day tree plantation event featuring infrastructural art installations, music, and performing arts by environmental artists, aimed at raising awareness of the Panthakunja Park rehabilitation project. The program invites public participation and contributions of indigenous saplings to restore the park's natural greenery during the monsoon season.

DATE: TODAY-SUNDAY | MARCH 17-23

TIME: 12PM-3PM

VENUE: PANTHAKUNJA PARK, KARWAN BAZAR



### 'Single White Female' remake in the works

Actresses Taylor Russell and Jenna Ortega are in discussions to star in a remake of *Single White Female*, as per recent reports. The film company 3000 Pictures is planning to remake the 1992 psychosexual thriller, which originally featured Bridget Fonda and Jennifer Jason Leigh.

Russell and Ortega are set to star in and produce the remake. However, Sony, which has a partnership with the production company, has yet to comment on the project.

## Macedonia nightclub fire kills 59

AFP, Skopje

A fire tore through a nightclub in North Macedonia early yesterday, killing 59 people, apparently after on-stage fireworks set the place ablaze, authorities said, announcing arrest warrants for four people.

They said 155 injured people had been taken to hospitals across the country, 18 of them in critical condition. Some of the serious cases were to be taken to other European countries for treatment.

The blaze started in the Club Pulse in the eastern town of Kocani around 3:00am, as the place was packed with more than 1,000 mostly young fans attending a concert.

The fire was probably caused by the use of pyrotechnic devices "used for light effects at the concert", said Interior Minister Pance Toskovski.

"Sparks caught the ceiling, which was made of easily flammable material, after which the fire rapidly spread across the whole discotheque, creating thick smoke," Toskovski said.

## Pak separatists kill 5 troops in Balochistan

AFP, Quetta

Separatists in southwest Pakistan killed at least five paramilitaries and wounded more than 30 yesterday, police told AFP, days after an attack on a train in Balochistan province left dozens dead.

"There were seven buses in the convoy which was heading to Taftan (on the Iranian border). At Noshki, a car laden with explosives hit one of the buses," said Mohammed Zafar, a police official in Noshki, a town in Balochistan.

Five people were killed and 35 wounded, he said.

The attack was claimed by the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), the main separatist group in the province, which said the bombing was carried out by its suicide attack branch.



People cheer as Mohammed, an Egyptian 'musaharati', beats a drum and makes calls for observant Muslims to wake up for the 'suhur' meal (last meal before fasting), in the old quarter of Cairo during the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, early yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Gaza truce talks dogged by deep divisions

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel and Hamas are set for more indirect talks yesterday on the Gaza ceasefire, but deep divisions persist between the two warring sides on the terms of the fragile truce.

Meditated by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States, the initial phase of the ceasefire took effect on January 19, largely halting 15 months of deadly fighting in Gaza.

That phase ended in early March, and though both sides have since refrained from all-out war, they have been unable to agree on the next stage of the ceasefire in the Palestinian territory.

Late on Saturday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed Israeli negotiators to continue the talks, his office said.



But he directed the team to base its negotiations on a proposal by US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff that calls for the "immediate release of 11 living hostages and half of the deceased hostages".

That came after Hamas said it was ready to release a living Israeli US hostage, Edan Alexander, along with the bodies of four other Israeli-Americans in exchange for Palestinian prisoners.

A Hamas delegation, which left Cairo for Doha where the movement is based, said the proposal to hand over the five had also been put forward by the United States.

But the United States, the key military ally of Israel, has since criticised Hamas' insistence on that proposal.

## Blast kills 16 in Syria

AFP, Damascus

A massive explosion believed to have been triggered by a scrap dealer handling an old bomb killed at least 16 people in Syria, civil defence officials said yesterday.

The blast on Saturday in the city of Latakia demolished a four-storey building, crushing residents underneath chunks of their flattened homes.

Aid agencies warned last month of the dangers posed by unexploded munitions left over from Syria's civil war that erupted in 2011. It said up to 300,000 of the roughly one million munitions used during the war never detonated.

"This exercise will have to be continued until November 2026, the time of graduation.

Furthermore, minimum import prices on certain goods must be eliminated as they violate the WTO rules.

"These will need to be withdrawn following LDC graduation since such practices are not WTO compatible," the CPD said.

The think-tank has urged the government to adjust tariff structures where current customs duties exceed the bound tariff commitments Bangladesh has made under the WTO agreements.

Bound tariff is the legally binding, maximum tariff rate a country commits to at the WTO for a specific product.

Bangladesh committed bound tariffs for 955 tariff lines, ranging from 25 percent to 200 percent.

For instance, while the country's bound tariff rates stand at 45 percent for milk powder and 30 percent for biscuits, the actual import taxes – comprising customs duty, regulatory duty, supplementary duty, value-added tax and advance income tax – exceed Bangladesh's limits.

The National Board of Revenue already identified 60 such lines that need to be brought down to bound tariff rates to ensure that the duty structure does not discriminate between imported and domestically produced items.

This flexibility enables the government to increase tariffs on imported goods that compete with local industries while lowering them on essential raw materials to reduce production costs.

"The NBR should fully utilise this flexibility. It should also be more vigilant to prevent any misuse of these tariff adjustments," he said.

To mitigate future trade risks, the CPD advised the government to invest in legal expertise, trade policy analysis and dispute resolution mechanisms.

"There is a need to build national capacity for handling possible trade disputes. The fiscal 2026-26 national budget should allocate resources for this," it said.

To all houthi terrorists, your time is up, and your attacks must stop, starting today. If they don't, hell will rain down upon you like nothing you have ever seen before!

Donald Trump  
US president



## Air strike killed 12 in Myanmar

AFP, Letpanhla

A Myanmar junta airstrike on a village held by anti-coup fighters killed at least 12 people according to a local administrative official, who said the bombardment targeted civilian areas.

The Friday afternoon strike hit the village of Letpanhla around 60 kilometres north of the country's second-biggest city of Mandalay.

The village in Singu township is held by the People's Defence Forces (PDF) -- anti-coup guerrillas who took up arms after the military toppled the country's civilian government four years ago.

"A lot of people were killed because they dropped bombs on crowded areas," said the local administrative official.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Department of Youth Development

Economic Acceleration and Resilience for NEET (EARN) Project

Jubo Bhaban, 108, Motijheel, C/A, Dhaka-1000

[www.dyd.gov.bd](http://www.dyd.gov.bd)

## Invitation for Tender

Date: 16-03-2025

Memo No. 34.01.0000.046.26.055.24-423

1	Ministry	Ministry of Youth and Sports
2	Agency	Department of Youth Development
3	Procuring Entity Name	Project Director, Economic Acceleration and Resilience for NEET (EARN) Project
4	Procuring Entity Code	Not Applicable
5	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka
6	Invitation for	Procurement of Non-Consulting Services (Vehicle Rental Service)
7	Invitation Ref No	
8	Date	16/03/2025

### KEY & FUNDING INFORMATION

9	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
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### FUNDING INFORMATION

10	Budget and Sources of Fund	Development Budget, GoB
11	Development Partners	International Development Association (IDA)

### PARTICULAR INFORMATION

12	Project Code (if applicable)	Not Applicable
13	Project Name (if applicable)	Economic Acceleration and Resilience for NEET (EARN) Project
14	Tender Package No.	S-2.2
15	Tender Package Name	Hiring of vehicle rental service for PMU officials
16	Tender Publication Date	17/03/2025
17	Tender Last Selling Date and Time	15/04/2025 at 5.00 pm
18	Tender Closing Date and time	16/04/2025 at 11.00 am
19	Tender Opening Date and time	16/04/2025 at 11.30 am

### 20 Name and Address of Offices

(a) Selling Tender Document	Office of the Project Director, Economic Acceleration and Resilience for NEET (EARN) Project, Department of Youth Development, 5th Floor, Jubo Bhaban, 108, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000
(b) Receiving Tender Document	Office of the Project Director, Economic Acceleration and Resilience for NEET (EARN) Project, Department of Youth Development, 5th Floor, Jubo Bhaban, 108, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000
(c) Opening Tender Document	Office of the Project Director, Economic Acceleration and Resilience for NEET (EARN) Project, Department of Youth Development, 5th Floor, Jubo Bhaban, 108, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000

### INFORMATION FOR TENDERER

21	Eligibility of Tenderer	Tenderers shall have the legal capacity to enter into the Contract under the Applicable Law. Tenderers shall have fulfilled their obligation to pay taxes under the provisions of laws and regulations of Bangladesh.
22	Brief Description of Services	Rental service of 1 unit Cross Country Vehicle and 5 units 12 seated Microbus
23	Price of Tender Document (BDT)	4,000/- (Four Thousand) only.
24	Location	Anywhere in Bangladesh under EARN project.
25	Tender Security, Amount (BDT)	9,50,000/- (Nine Lakh and Fifty Thousand) only.
26	Completion Time	31/12/2028

### PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

27	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Kazi Moklesur Rahman
28	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Project Director (Joint Secretary), Economic Acceleration and Resilience for NEET (EARN) Project
29	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Department of Youth Development, 5th Floor, Jubo Bhaban, 108, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000
30	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Tel: +880-02-55101121, e-mail: pd.earn@dyd.gov.bd

The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings

Signed  
Manik Chandra Ghosh  
Senior System Analyst  
Dhaka Computer Center  
BPDB, Dhaka

Ref No. 27.11.0000.716.77.25.538

## Invitation for e-Tenders

Date: 13/03/2025

e-Tender are invited in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) for the Procurement of following work.

Sl. No	Tender ID & Ref. No.	Name of works	Tender publication date	Tender closing date
1	Tender ID: 1086222 Ref. No: 27.11.0000.716.77.25.538 Dt.: 13.03.2025	Works for IT Support services and Data Connectivity (Installation, Testing and commissioning and Configuration of Router Switch and other communication devices for data connectivity along with monthly recurring charge for all computer centers and zonal offices to Dhaka Computer center of BPDB) for 2 (two) years.	13.03.2025	07.04.2025 Time: 12:00

GD-681

বিদ্যুৎ/জন- ১০৮(১)/১৬/০৩/২৫

## Reform power sector to reduce subsidy

### Govt must prioritise increasing efficiency, cutting costs

The interim government's move to increase power and fertiliser subsidies in the revised FY25 budget by 57.9 percent highlights, once again, the prevailing mess in the power sector. There had been increases in subsidies during Awami League's tenure too, most of which ended up lining the pockets of vested interest groups and eventually increasing the debt burden of the nation. The interim government seems to be following the same prescription, albeit for different reasons. Reportedly, it is looking to increase the power subsidy to Tk 62,000 crore (a 55 percent rise) and the fertiliser subsidy to Tk 28,000 crore (a 64.7 percent rise).

A report by this daily quoted a finance ministry official who explained that the power subsidy increase is being considered so as not to raise power prices during this time of high inflation and to pay off the huge arrears carried over from the previous regime. While we appreciate that the authorities took into account consumers' interests and refrained from increasing prices, they could have, for our long-term benefits, taken measures to address the institutional inefficiency of the sector that are draining resources. It is estimated that as much as Tk 11,444 crore could have been saved by reducing power production costs by 10 percent, which in turn could have kept the subsidy in control.

In fact, a recent study by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) found that the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) can save Tk 13,800 crore annually—a loss currently covered by government subsidy—just by fixing some core problems. Its recommendations included shifting half of the existing industrial demand to the grid, which is currently met by captive generators, and adding 3,000 megawatts (MW) of renewables, reducing load-shedding, as well as limiting transmission and distribution losses.

During Hasina's tenure, 81 percent of the power subsidy—Tk 39,406 crore in the revised budget for FY2023-24—was spent on the rented power plants to pay for capacity charges, even when those plants were sitting idle. It is time to critically revisit the collusive deals of the last regime and reduce reliance on rental power plants. According to IEEFA, transitioning to electric systems from gas driven appliances, like boilers, will help increase BPDB's revenue from selling additional energy while reducing capacity payments to idle plants.

The arrears left by the previous regime may take time to repay, but the interim government should take prudent measures to rectify the situation. Every effort must be made to ensure that the nation is not burdened with additional debt. We can no longer afford inefficiency in the power sector or allow it to run without accountability.

## Bangladesh Railway must tighten its belt

### Another case of wasteful spending shows need for corrective action

In yet another exposé of corrupt practices under the Awami League government, it has been revealed that Bangladesh Railway spent about Tk 38 crore on two automated train washing plants in 2021, only for them to become nonfunctional within just 20 months. During this time, the plants managed to clean 2,929 trains. Considering the total expenditure on their procurement and installation, it means that each wash cost the government about Tk 1.3 lakh, which is quite unthinkable. For context, only Tk 1,000 or so would have been required for a manual wash. This case, reported by Prothom Alo, serves as a glaring example of how government projects were often wasteful, mismanaged, and riddled with questionable procurement decisions.

The automated washing plants, purchased as part of a railway coach procurement project, were meant to modernise train cleaning by saving time and minimising water consumption. Instead, they turned out to be an overpriced failure. Not only did they cease to function in less than two years, but even when operational, they failed to clean train interiors, including toilets, requiring manual labour afterward. The entire endeavour reeks of a plan designed more for inflating project costs and lining the pockets of those involved than for serving the public.

Unfortunately, the railway sector was plagued by such corruption and mismanagement throughout the 15-plus years of Awami League's rule. And unnecessary procurement or excessive spending using various excuses was the hallmark of such ill-conceived projects. For instance, three officials visited the US apparently to "see the effectiveness" of the automated washing plants, one of them retiring soon after the purchase. As part of various projects, four tamping machines—used in track repairs—were also purchased, each at a cost of Tk 15-30 crore. These machines are now mostly non-functional. The plight of the DEMU trains imported from China is also well-known. There have been many such procurements and expenditures that were not needed, or carefully thought through, but were green-lighted anyway only to fulfil the wishes of politically-backed contractors and railway officials, who hardly ever faced justice for such corruption.

This must change. A country with scarce resources cannot afford to waste billions on dysfunctional projects while essential public services struggle for funding. We urge the authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into the washing plant fiasco and other such failed initiatives, and hold to account those behind them. Bangladesh Railway, and by extension all public offices, must ensure that all projects and procurements follow strict cost-benefit analyses, and that they are utilised properly to serve the public.

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

#### South Africans vote to end apartheid

On this day in 1992, nearly 69 percent of White South African voters backed F.W. de Klerk's reforms—which included the repeal of racially discriminatory laws—and effectively endorsed the dismantling of apartheid.



## What's impeding the reforms in Bangladesh?



Dr Selim Raihan  
is professor in the Department of Economics  
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Continuous reform is vital for sustainable progress. Over the years, Bangladesh, a developing economy, has struggled to implement necessary economic, political, administrative, judicial and social reforms. While significant economic reforms in the 1980s and early 1990s laid the groundwork for a market-oriented economy, major structural reforms have stalled since then. In contrast, Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam have achieved remarkable progress through continuous reform, such as the 1986 "Doi Moi" policy, which boosted productivity, investment, and trade.

Economic reforms in the 1980s and 1990s spurred private sector growth and investment, but recent stagnation in domestic and foreign investment, banking sector weaknesses, and limited tax collection highlight the need for structural changes in banking, revenue systems, and trade policies.

Political reform is vital for democratic development, electoral transparency, and internal party democracy, but corruption and political reluctance hinder progress. Without it, good governance and sectoral reforms remain challenging. Administrative reform is key to improving bureaucratic efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Digitalising operations and reducing complexities can make governance more citizen-friendly.

Judicial reform is necessary to address delays, backlog, and corruption, ensuring swift justice and judicial independence to restore public trust. Social reform, including education, healthcare, labour market improvements, poverty alleviation, and the empowerment of women and marginalised groups, is fundamental for inclusive growth. Comprehensive reforms across these sectors are imperative for Bangladesh's long-term progress.

**Why reform is difficult in Bangladesh**

Implementing the desired reforms in

Bangladesh is particularly challenging due to the complexities of political and social realities. Reluctance of the major political parties, influence of vested interest groups, and weak demand for reform from society play crucial roles in obstructing reform efforts. Although policy reform initiatives have been undertaken in the country at various times, their structural and effective implementation have not taken place. The existing political culture and

changes.

Another major reason for the stagnation of the reform process is the influence of vested interest groups. Political and business elites, along with bureaucratic opponents of reform, benefit from the current system and resist change. These groups actively work against reform efforts to preserve their privileges. For instance, attempts to increase transparency and accountability in the banking and taxation sectors face resistance from influential individuals, as such reforms could limit their irregular financial activities and special benefits. Similarly, efforts to reform tariff policies, government subsidies, and procurement processes are often obstructed by powerful groups using their political and administrative influence.

Public opinion and societal demand



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

the centralised nature of power are significant barriers to reform.

The lack of internal democracy within major political parties prevents them from being genuinely interested in implementing democratic and governance reforms at the national level. Party leaders' dominance, hereditary leadership, and irregular decision-making processes hinder political reform. Furthermore, elite groups benefiting from the existing system oppose reform. Political parties often promise reforms while in power, but fail to take concrete steps for implementation. Meanwhile, when in opposition, they use reform demands as a political strategy, which they do not follow through once in power. As a result, there is a clear lack of political will for long-term structural

for reform are also relatively weak in Bangladesh. A strong societal demand for reform has not yet been well-organised, which reduces pressure on the government and policymakers to initiate change. Although there is public dissatisfaction with corruption, inefficiency, and a lack of transparency in various sectors, this sentiment has not been mobilised into a collective movement. The active role of the media, civil society, and educated citizens is crucial in this process. However, their efforts have so far failed to exert sufficient pressure on policymakers for reform.

Given the lack of strong internal pressure for reform, much of the impetus for past reforms has come from external actors such as international development organisations and

## Pain, bleeding and helplessness Living with fibroids and cysts



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SIFAT AFRIN SHAMS

The world as we know it is full of inequalities. Some are more detrimental than others, like the glaring inequity in the research fields of women's and men's health.

Medical treatment is a basic need and women are different from men in many ways, including physiologically. Women's cardiovascular health, hormonal balance, mental health, musculoskeletal health, immune system, metabolism, and last but not least, reproductive health, are different from those of men. For instance, with heart attacks, the most common symptom in both men and women is chest pain. However, women are often more likely to experience other symptoms, such as shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting, or jaw pain. Women and men also metabolise and respond to many drugs differently. There are also gender-based variations in the physiological mechanisms underlying pain.

However, even though women make up close to 50 percent of the world's population, there is a glaring lack of research on their health.

This historical focus on the "default" male body sidelines conditions predominantly affecting women such as uterine fibroids—non-cancerous growths on or in the uterus, and ovarian cysts—sacs filled with fluid that form on or inside an ovary. Is this oversight just a scientific failure? No,

it is also a social injustice with deep, multifaceted implications.

Some claim that an estimated 171 million women worldwide have uterine fibroids. Another source indicates global prevalence has increased from 126.41 to 226.05 million cases in recent decades.

On the other hand, an ovarian cyst is a widespread phenomenon in women of reproductive age. Among the people I know closely, seven women are combating this problem in various stages. The number will be eight if I count myself. So, even though I failed to collect information on the number of cases worldwide, again due to the lack of research in this area, I know that the number is very high.

These conditions hamper the quality of life with their debilitating symptoms—painful periods, heavy and inconsistent bleeding, unmanageable cramps, chronic pelvic pain, bloating and swelling, back and leg pain, constipation and diarrhoea, anaemia, etc. Along with these, stress and feelings of helplessness stem from lack of options.

So, who develops cysts and fibroids and why? Can they be prevented? You guessed the answer correctly. We do not know what leads to the development of these unwanted growths, nor is there any prevention. To date, no long-term or non-invasive treatment option exists for uterine

fibroids or pathological ovarian cysts. All you can do is be vigilant and regularly visit your sonographer and gynaecologist, hoping to catch them early so you don't need to go to the operating table.

The consequences of this imbalance in the medical research sector are stark. Without sufficient research, the pathogenesis and preventive strategies for these common yet debilitating conditions remain poorly understood, resulting in women suffering through cycles of pain, fertility issues, and diminished quality of life.

The lack of preventive measures for fibroids and ovarian cysts means that treatment is reactive rather than proactive—addressing symptoms after significant damage has been done. This reactive approach not only burdens the healthcare system but also places an emotional and physical toll on millions of women, whose reproductive health is sidelined in favour of conditions deemed more "urgent" or "universal."

The situation is even more pronounced in the Indian subcontinent, where patriarchal norms and socio-cultural taboos further hinder open discussions about women's health.

Bangladesh faces unique challenges: a high population density, widespread poverty, and a healthcare system stretched thin by infectious diseases and maternal health emergencies. These pressing concerns, while critical, have often crowded out the nuanced research and measures needed for chronic conditions like fibroids and ovarian cysts. Moreover, the stigma attached to discussing menstrual irregularities or pelvic pain further discourages women from seeking medical advice until conditions have advanced, thereby complicating treatment and outcomes.

Establishing powerful genetic labs in Bangladesh is one of the steps required to address the lack of research in the medical sector, including in women's health, she said. There are only a few such labs in the country—that too in private capacity, she added.

Research about ovarian cysts and fibroids is at the intersection of healthcare equity. More research and better treatment are also necessary for society and the economy. Ovarian cysts and fibroids cost women, their families, and businesses hundreds of thousands in lost work hours and medical procedures.

Obstetrician-gynaecologist (OB-GYN) Dr Ferdousi Begum, a professor of the Bangladesh Institute of Research and Rehabilitation in Diabetes, Endocrine and Metabolic Disorders (BIRDEM) Hospital, said that there has only been sporadic and small-scale research in this area in Bangladesh, which is not nearly enough.

In developing countries, including Bangladesh, funding for research on women's health is much less in proportion to other fields, she said, adding that more research in the area can assist doctors in helping the patients in newer ways.

Women's reproductive health is still a taboo in many households. Fibroids and cysts are often diagnosed late when the only available treatment left is surgery, she said.

Pain and excessive bleeding during periods should not be ignored as these can be symptoms of cysts and fibroids, the OB-GYN said. In case of recurrent fibroids, which is fairly common, doctors sometimes suggest removing the uterus. However, this option is not for those who want to conceive. However, fibroids and cysts (which are also likely to recur) may cause infertility as well.

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# Awami League's downfall and the politics of cognitive dissonance



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H.M. NAZMUL ALAM

History has a way of repeating itself, often with different actors but the same tragic plotlines. The fall of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government has left behind a political landscape harshly familiar to students of history and political psychology. The party's steadfast refusal to acknowledge its mistakes, its insistence on conspiracy theories, and its remorseless demeanour all indicate a textbook case of cognitive dissonance. As the pioneering social psychologist Leon Festinger argued, when confronted with overwhelming evidence contradicting deeply held beliefs, people do not necessarily change their views; instead, they double down.

Festinger's seminal work on cognitive dissonance explains the mental discomfort experienced when reality clashes with pre-existing beliefs. In the 1950s, he infiltrated a doomsday cult whose members were convinced the world would end on a specific

reality, is now on full display in the Awami League.

For more than 15 years, Sheikh Hasina and her party built a political fortress based on dominance, authoritarian tendencies, and the erosion of democratic institutions. Opposition parties were crushed, the media muzzled, and electoral mechanisms hijacked to perpetuate her rule. When the walls of this fortress crumbled under the weight of mass protests, Hasina and her followers did not introspect. Instead, they sought solace in an alternative narrative: their downfall was not due to popular outrage but rather an international conspiracy.

The Greek concept of hubris—the excessive pride that leads to downfall—perfectly encapsulates the Awami League's attitude. Political scientist Graham Allison's theory of organisational failure suggests that when institutions become too entrenched in their

a grand design. Despite evidence that her government's mishandling of the student-led movement resulted in mass casualties, Hasina and her exiled ministers refuse to acknowledge any wrongdoing. This is not merely political stubbornness but a deeper psychological need to avoid self-recrimination.

Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre argued that people avoid self-reflection because it forces them to confront their own responsibility. If

provides a coping mechanism for its leaders and supporters, many of whom have invested their careers and reputations in the party's narrative. Admitting failure would be personally and professionally devastating. Secondly, by externalising blame, the party keeps alive the possibility of a political resurgence. If the narrative remains that the Awami League was unjustly removed rather than rightfully ousted, its leaders can

violent suppression of protests, but because they feel abandoned. These were the foot soldiers who once championed the party's cause, only to find themselves leaderless in its darkest hour.

Political theorist Antonio Gramsci wrote extensively about how political movements sustain themselves through "organic intellectuals" at the grassroots level. These are the local leaders, student activists, and community organisers who serve as the bridge between ideology and the masses. However, when a party's leadership becomes too insular and removed from ground realities, this bridge collapses.

The Awami League's grassroots members now face an internal dilemma: do they continue to defend a leadership that refuses to acknowledge them, or do they begin seeking alternative political affiliations? This is where cognitive dissonance becomes an individual as well as a collective phenomenon. For years, these activists believed they were part of a righteous cause. The reality that their leaders abandoned them in exile creates a painful internal contradiction, one that can only be resolved in two ways: either by continuing to believe in the party despite its failures, or by breaking away and facing an uncertain political future.

Acknowledging mistakes is not a sign of weakness; it is a prerequisite for political rehabilitation. Countries with strong democratic traditions have seen fallen parties regain public trust by embracing self-reform. Germany's Social Democratic Party, after years of political decline, rebounded by admitting past mistakes and adjusting its policies. Even in Bangladesh's own history, parties that have embraced change have managed to return to relevance.

Charles Darwin famously stated, "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change." If the Awami League wishes to remain politically relevant, it must recognise this fundamental truth. Denial, conspiracy theories, and deflecting responsibility may serve as temporary shields against the pain of political loss, but they do not constitute a long-term strategy for survival.



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

Hasina were to admit that her government collapsed due to internal corruption, misgovernance, and public outrage, she would have to struggle with a lifetime of political miscalculations. The easier option, as cognitive dissonance theory suggests, is to alter the narrative.

Political history is rife with examples of leaders who refused to accept responsibility for their downfall. US President Richard Nixon, after Watergate, remained convinced that he was the victim of a media-driven witch hunt. In more recent history, Donald Trump's continued insistence that the 2020 US presidential election was stolen shows a similar psychological mechanism at play.

The Awami League's strategy of non-apology serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it

mobilise support on the promise of a return to power.

However, this strategy carries long-term risks. Philosopher Hannah Arendt, in her analysis of totalitarian regimes, observed that when political parties rely on manufactured narratives to sustain their existence, they become increasingly disconnected from reality. The more the Awami League insists that it was the victim of a grand conspiracy, the less likely it is to engage in the necessary reforms to regain public trust. In a democracy, no party can survive indefinitely without a genuine social contract with its citizens.

One of the most revealing aspects of the Awami League's downfall is the reaction of its grassroots activists. Many have gone into hiding, not because they were part of the

**The Greek concept of hubris perfectly encapsulates the Awami League's attitude. Political scientist Graham Allison's theory of organisational failure suggests that when institutions become too entrenched in their ways, they resist necessary adaptation even in the face of imminent collapse. This is evident in Sheikh Hasina's unchanging rhetoric, even after her government was ousted.**

date. When the prophecy failed, rather than admitting their mistake, the cultists rationalised their beliefs by claiming their faith had saved the world. This pattern, where individuals or groups faced with disconfirming evidence refuse to accept

ways, they resist necessary adaptation even in the face of imminent collapse.

This is evident in Hasina's unchanging rhetoric, even after her government was ousted. Leaked phone conversations reveal her solid belief that she was the victim of

## The future of international crimes prosecution in Bangladesh



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The International Crimes Tribunal, Bangladesh (ICT-BD) has been widely perceived as the ultimate forum for prosecuting crimes committed during the July uprising. The high expectations placed on the ICT-BD often lead to the filing of cases that may not fall within its jurisdiction. This tendency may result in prolonged proceedings or improper use of tribunal resources.

The prosecution of international crimes, whether at the international or domestic level, is a serious matter. The gravity of these crimes, their contextual elements, and the ranks of the offenders distinguish them from other domestic offences. For instance, murder is criminalised under all penal legislation worldwide. However, murder may be classified as genocide, a crime against humanity, or a war crime depending on the presence of specific contextual elements. It may often appear that certain complaints—such as those related to single incidents or incidents falling below a particular threshold—don't fall within the jurisdictional framework of the ICT-BD.

The trial of international crimes has always been considered an exception to a country's general criminal justice system. This implies that an alleged crime should first be prosecuted through the general criminal justice system before being referred to a specialised tribunal dealing with international crimes, rather than being directly referred to a specialised tribunal.

Recognising the importance of this issue, the interim government incorporated Section 11A, paragraphs 3 and 4, into the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973 through the International Crimes (Tribunals) (Amendment) Ordinance, 2024. Section 11A(3) states that if an accused is charged under the 1973 act but the subsequent evidence suggests the commission of a different offence punishable under the Penal Code, 1860, or any other applicable law, the case may be transferred to a competent court for appropriate adjudication. Section 11A(4) outlines procedural matters related to such transfers.

It is worth noting that the application of Section 11A(3) of the 1973 act applies only after charges have been framed. However, it would be more effective if this process could be initiated at the time of charge framing. In order to maximise the benefits of Section

11A(3), the ICT-BD should adopt prosecutorial guidelines to filter out cases that fall outside its jurisdictional framework. This approach can be referred to as "domestic complementarity."

In the context of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the ICC can only investigate and prosecute individuals accused of international crimes if the forum state is unwilling, unable or inactive in addressing the situation. Here, the ICC and domestic criminal justice systems function in a complementary manner. One of the key objectives of the principle of complementarity in the Rome Statute is to reduce the ICC's workload and give precedence to domestic justice mechanisms. Similar justifications can be applied to the ICT-BD.

This policy is to mitigate the risk of political backlash. Though it is entirely legal to prosecute an individual for a general crime after determining that the allegations of international crimes against them are not substantiated, the political ramifications of such prosecutions could be significant. Such a prosecution may be perceived as an abuse of process or an act of political vengeance by the supporters of the accused, even if fair trial standards are thoroughly upheld. A well-implemented domestic complementarity policy would help the ICT-BD avoid such controversies. From the accused's perspective, such a policy would also simplify legal proceedings, reduce procedural complexities, and help the accused avoid harassment.

In light of these considerations, the ICT-BD should formulate a clearly defined policy on domestic complementarity. At minimum, it should include definitions and elements of relevant crimes, the relationship between the ICT-BD and the general criminal justice system, case filing procedures, and other procedural guidelines. A standardised complaint submission form for the ICT-BD could also be introduced.

Simultaneously, the government should

**The trial of international crimes has always been considered an exception to a country's general criminal justice system. This implies that an alleged crime should first be prosecuted through the general criminal justice system before being referred to a specialised tribunal dealing with international crimes, rather than being directly referred to a specialised tribunal.**

The foremost reason for adopting a domestic complementarity policy is strategic policymaking. The trial of international crimes is legally complex and politically sensitive, requiring a careful balance between the victims' rights and the accused's fair trial rights while facing multifaceted challenges from both domestic and international quarters. Therefore, the ICT-BD should be selective in selecting cases. This approach is also crucial from the perspective of the judicial economy. In some instances, external political pressures may urge the ICT-BD to take on cases that do not satisfy its jurisdictional requirements under the 1973 law. Outright rejection of such cases could also provoke a public outcry. A clearly defined policy on domestic complementarity would help manage such situations constructively.

Another reason in favour of adopting

reconsider broadening the scope of Section 11A(3) through an amendment to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973. As noted earlier, the provision currently applies only after a charge has been framed. Its effectiveness would be significantly enhanced if amended to allow its application from the moment of case initiation. The expansion of the scope of interlocutory appeals under the 1973 act can also help achieve the objectives of Section 11A.

At present, Section 21A of the law limits interlocutory appeals to cases involving contempt of the ICT-BD. By contrast, the Rome Statute and the statutes of UN ad hoc tribunals permit interlocutory appeals on jurisdiction, admissibility, arrest warrants, and framing of charges. Expanding the scope of interlocutory appeals of the ICT-BD through an amendment to the 1973 act would align the tribunal with

international standards.

The recent report on Bangladesh by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has raised concerns about the compliance of the ICT-BD with human rights standards. In response, the government has expressed its intention to the OHCHR to further amend the 1973 act, to address these human rights-related criticisms (2025

OHCHR Bangladesh Report, Para 255). At this juncture, the government should seriously consider amending sections 11A(3) and 21A of the law to enable the ICT-BD to formulate a domestic complementarity policy. Concurrently, the ICT-BD should adopt a policy to manage its workload, reduce external pressures, enhance judicial efficiency, and strengthen its legitimacy and effectiveness.

### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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### Invitation for e-Tendering

Invitation Reference No.	Memo No: 35.01.8800.471.07.001.25-697	Date: 16/03/2025	
Tender ID & No.	Work description	Publication publication date & time	Opening date & time
1087082, e-GP/68/EE/SDR/2024-2025	Protective works by RCC Palisiding at 5th(p) Km of Kaliakandapara-Kamarkhanda-Ullapara (Bhutgacha) (2-5403) Road under Sirajganj Road Division during the year 2024-2025.	16 Mar -2025 11.00 Hrs	08 April-2025 15:30 Hrs
1087081, e-GP/69/EE/SDR/2024-2025	Repair of Potholes and Seal Coat at Ch: 4+476 (p) to 5+976 (p) Km of Porabari-Kamarkhondo-Nalka (Jamtoli) (2-5406) Road under Road Division Sirajganj during the year 2024-2025.	16 Mar -2025 11.00 Hrs	08 April-2025 15:40 Hrs

This is an online tender where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline and hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender please register on the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches for 08.04.2025 up to 13:00 Hrs. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) (+880960912233, +880176265528-31).

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# DHAKA'S DEADLY AIR

## What we know and what we can do

*This report was prepared jointly by researchers at ICDDR,B and the Bengal Institute for Architecture, Landscapes and Settlements.*

We are what we breathe. Now imagine that breath—something we do without thinking—could be quietly slaying years of our lives. That's no idle fear: air pollution claimed 8.1 million lives in 2021 alone, roughly one in every eight deaths worldwide and one in three in South Asia, according to the latest Global Disease Burden report. It's the second deadliest health risk on the planet, trailing only high blood pressure, and it spares no one.

The threat comes in two forms: the polluted air filling our streets and the smoke lurking indoors from cooking fires or dusty homes. Over 90% of us breathe air so toxic it acts as a slow poison, says the World Health Organization.

Tiny particles—PM<sub>2.5</sub>—slip past our defenses, wreaking havoc: 48% of chronic lung diseases like COPD tie back to this particulate matter, while 34% of preterm births in 2021—babies arriving too early—link to the air mothers breathe.

Dhaka has some of the deadliest air pollution in the world. Routinely among the world's most polluted cities, its air is a stew of brick kiln soot, exhaust fumes, construction dust, and factory emissions, whipped up by runaway urban sprawl. Recent reports show its Air Quality Index (AQI) often topping 200—“very unhealthy”—a daily gamble for lungs and hearts. The Clean Air and Sustainable Environment (CASE) project tracked the toll: In 2018, 75% of days were unfit to breathe. Even in 2020, over half stayed hazardous. For millions in Dhaka, it's coughs that won't quit, cancers that bloom silently, and hearts that give out too soon.

In 2024, Dhaka ranked 13th

Another report, the Bangladesh National Air Quality Management Plan 2024-2030, identified six sectors of PM<sub>2.5</sub> pollution in Dhaka City: household combustion, power plants, brick kilns, solid waste, road dust, and transport. Among these, household combustion contributes the most (28%) and transport the least (4%), according to the document.

The report states that brick kilns contribute only 13% of Dhaka's total PM<sub>2.5</sub> pollution, yet surprisingly, it does not mention industrial emissions at all.

A significant discrepancy shows up when comparing the two studies. While the Norwegian study identifies industry as the major contributor to PM<sub>2.5</sub> pollution, the national report attributes the largest share to households. Additionally, the national report does not provide data on gas pollution, and neither report accounts for ozone pollution. These discrepancies and gaps highlight the urgent need for a comprehensive study.

### Seasonal patterns of pollution in Dhaka's air

Air pollution in Dhaka also exhibits seasonal variability, with significantly higher levels in the winter months (December–February) and lower levels in the monsoon season (June–September). However, in the summer and post-monsoon seasons, although the levels of particulate matter and gases remain lower than in winter, they still exceed air quality standards set by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Bangladesh's National Air Quality Standards. A similar seasonal pattern can be observed in other

Turag, Dhaleswari, Shitalakhya, and Bangshi. The availability of suitable textured soil, extensive open lands, easy waterway transportation, and increased city demand are key factors for their locational developments.

Recent satellite imagery analysis by the Geographic Research Unit of the Bengal Institute identified 389 operational brick kilns within the RAJUK boundary of Dhaka, with an additional 600 kilns located within 20 kilometers of the RAJUK area.

Smoke containing NO<sub>x</sub>, CO, SO<sub>2</sub>, and particulate matter (PM) from coal combustion in these brick kilns, especially during the winter months, is carried over Dhaka City by the northwestern winds, leading to a significant deterioration in Dhaka's air quality.

### Transboundary air pollution transmission

Not all of Dhaka's air pollution originates within the city itself. During the period from late October to December, the great Indo-Gangetic Plain (an area of 700,000 sq. km.) experiences a dense cloud of smoke in its air, mainly due to stubble burning. Farmers in northern India burn paddy straw after harvesting rice, causing this extremely polluted air, mixed with smoke and particulates, to engulf the densely populated plain, covering Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Bangladesh. The cloudy haze over this region is also contributed by more than 100 coal-fired power plants operational throughout the year in northern India. Some studies confirm that Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) exceeds 400 during that time, which

### Immediate Air Pollution Remediation Measures



**Immediate measures to improve Dhaka's air quality. Prepared by the Bengal Institute.**

record concentrations of PM<sub>2.5</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, O<sub>3</sub>, and CO in the surrounding air of the station location based on which daily Air Quality Index (AQI) data is provided. However, 16 stations are insufficient to assess national air quality, and four stations alone cannot accurately represent Dhaka's air quality. If there are no monitoring stations installed in areas like industrial and other active zones, how can we measure the quality of air for those areas? How can meaningful management strategies be developed without detailed spatial air quality data for all those zones?

Bangladesh launched the National Air Quality Management Plan (2024–2030) (NAQMP), developed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change and the Department of Environment. The primary goal of the NAQMP is to meet the interim target for annual PM<sub>2.5</sub> set by the World Health Organization (WHO) while meeting the targets outlined in the national air quality standards: (1) reducing PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration in the air of the entire country to 15 µg/m<sup>3</sup> and in Dhaka's air to 30 µg/m<sup>3</sup> by 2030, and (2) gradually increasing Good and Moderate AQI days annually. Focusing on meeting those targets, a national committee on air pollution control was formed to implement Air Pollution Control Rules (2022) and coordinate with relevant agencies on specific interventions to comply with the new rules. However, this management plan

forecast information so people can take cautionary measures in advance. Preparing this forecast model also requires intensive spatial data, as mentioned before.

### Controlling industrial emissions

Upgrading factory technologies and shifting to clean energy utilization in factories need to be encouraged through tax exemptions. In addition, industries should install indoor air purification systems for the health benefits of the people working there. Since brick kilns significantly worsen Dhaka's air quality, particularly in winter, alternative locations for these factories should be explored. If relocation is not feasible, improved production methods, such as the Zigzag 2.0 technology proposed by ICDDR,B, must be adopted.

### Regulating vehicular emissions and promoting sustainable transportation

Investing in low-emission public transportation infrastructure, such as buses, trams, and metro systems, can substantially reduce emissions by decreasing dependence on private vehicles. This shift will also reduce travel times, minimizing residents' exposure to traffic-related pollution. Additional measures, such as limiting vehicle speeds, designating parking zones, banning vehicles that emit black smoke, restricting heavy-duty vehicles during the daytime, phasing out expired vehicles or upgrading them with

using water sprinklers, and installing dust barriers—can minimize airborne particles. Some studies identified that open sand can travel more than 40 kilometers with wind, and so dust pollution control mechanisms can be developed to reduce particulate pollution from the open sand areas (approximately 17,700 acres) in Dhaka City.

### Protecting and expanding urban blue and green infrastructures

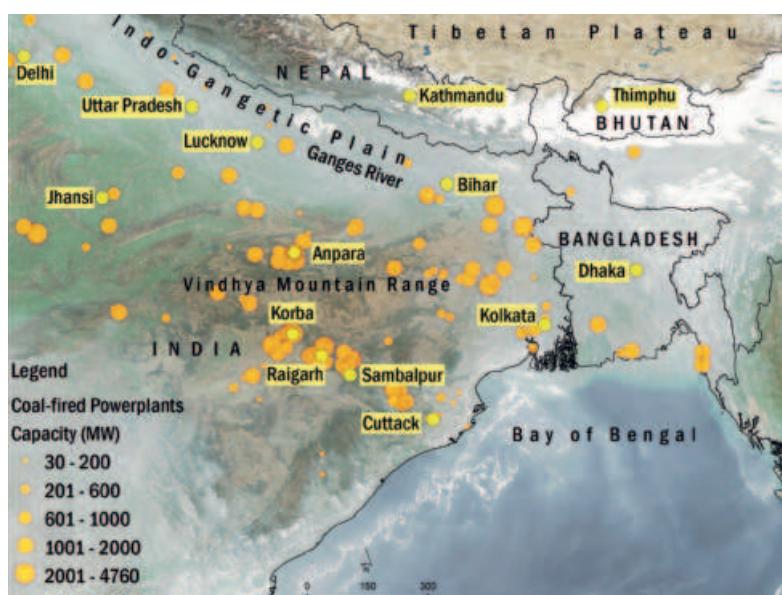
Trees and green spaces act as natural air filters, absorbing pollutants and improving air quality. Expanding parks, rooftop gardens, and roadside plantations can mitigate pollution and heat while also providing ecological benefits. Implementing urban forestry projects, particularly in high-traffic and industrial areas, can have a long-term positive impact on air quality. Developing a green tree belt around the city on the riverbanks can be a good option to sink dust and gas pollutants and provide city dwellers with a green ambience.

### Implementing strict waste management policies

The burning of solid waste, particularly plastic and organic materials, releases harmful pollutants, including PM, CO, and CO<sub>2</sub>, into the air. Establishing proper waste segregation, promoting recycling, and enforcing bans on open-air burning should be the top priorities to reduce emissions from waste disposal. Encouraging composting and biogas production can provide eco-friendly solutions and generate alternative income sources.

### Improving indoor air quality

Numerous studies have shown that indoor air quality can be just as poor as outdoor air quality. Polluted air from outside can easily infiltrate homes, exposing residents to the same harmful contaminants. Even in air-conditioned rooms, individuals are not immune to toxic air, as air conditioners primarily cool the air but do not filter out pollutants. Installing air purifiers in homes, schools, and workplaces can improve indoor air quality. Additionally, maintaining indoor plants such as aloe vera and spider plants can naturally improve air quality. Promoting cleaner cooking alternatives, such as LPG, electric stoves, or improved biomass stoves, can reduce household air pollution.



**Movement of transboundary air pollution. On 28 January 2025, the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) on the Aqua and Terra satellites captured this true-color image of dust drifting across the Gangetic Plain, stretching over India and Bangladesh. Image by NASA, 2025. Map prepared by the Bengal Institute.**

has not been effective due to several resource constraints and limitations. A critical gap in the NAQMP is that it provides a set of suggestions for different entities polluting the air without setting up strict obligations for them. Another weakness is the absence of regulations in the NAQMP to control toxic industrial emissions.

### Disease and pollution correlation

To identify the health impacts of air pollution, it is essential to develop a comprehensive locational database of respiratory diseases. Continuous monitoring of patients' respiratory health with their locational information can be collected throughout the year. Once the database is created, it can be correlated with pollution data to understand how people are affected by air pollution and at what level, according to specific areas.

### Issuing air pollution forecasts

Another important measure is to provide 2/3 days of air pollution

particulate matter reduction devices, implementing stringent regulations for diesel-powered vehicles, and promoting environmentally friendly transportation options, can further curb air pollution from traffic. Improving current motor vehicle exhaust technologies to ensure more efficient combustion will also contribute to reducing emissions.

In addition, Dhaka's footpaths need to be more pedestrian-friendly to encourage people to walk short distances. In summary, Dhaka's traffic system needs a complete overhaul to create a more sustainable, pedestrian- and eco-friendly urban environment.

### Managing construction, road dust, and open sands

The rapid urbanization of Dhaka has led to excessive dust pollution from construction sites and unpaved roads. Implementing mandatory dust control measures—such as covering construction materials,

particulate matter reduction devices, implementing stringent regulations for diesel-powered vehicles, and promoting environmentally friendly transportation options, can further curb air pollution from traffic. Improving current motor vehicle exhaust technologies to ensure more efficient combustion will also contribute to reducing emissions.

In addition, Dhaka's footpaths need to be more pedestrian-friendly to encourage people to walk short distances. In summary, Dhaka's traffic system needs a complete overhaul to create a more sustainable, pedestrian- and eco-friendly urban environment.

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# Hamza's arrival sparks festivities in Habiganj

MINTU DESHWARA

Excitement and anticipation are at an all-time high in Snanghat village of Bahubal Upazila, Habiganj, as English footballer of Bangladeshi origin, Hamza Choudhury, prepares for a historic visit.

The Sheffield United star, who has decided to represent Bangladesh at the international level, will arrive at his ancestral village today ahead of his debut for the Bangladesh team in the Asian Cup Qualifiers against India in Shillong on March 25.

The entire village has transformed into a festival ground, with over 500 decorative gates erected along the 4.5 km road from the Putijuri highway to his home. People from all walks of life, politicians to sports enthusiasts, have united to celebrate the arrival of the prodigal son of Snanghat.

Mohammad Monir Khan, a local entrepreneur, shared his excitement: "My house is just 100 feet away from Hamza's. Everyone is eagerly waiting for his arrival. Even families with past disputes have come together in joy. This is a moment of unity and pride for us."

Hamza's visit coincides with an annual Urs at his family home, where his father initially came to perform his grandfather's annual rites. However, his homecoming



is more than just a personal visit — it's a momentous occasion for Bangladesh's football scene.

Local resident Sajjad Mia expressed his pride: "It is an incredible feeling that a player from our village has played in the English league and will now represent Bangladesh. Hamza's father often spoke of his son's deep connection to Bangladesh, and now that love has turned into action."

Hamza's connection to his ancestral home goes beyond football. With his financial support, an orphanage, mosque,

and madrasa have been built, reinforcing his commitment to giving back to his roots. During his visit, Hamza is expected to meet and exchange greetings with orphaned students.

Among the many excited fans is Jadi Hasan, who travelled to his in-laws' house just to catch a glimpse of Hamza. "I have never been this thrilled! Just the thought that a star player has roots here is amazing. I won't leave until I see him."

A grand reception has been arranged by the villagers, and Faizabad High School's

## Breaking the 20-second barrier

The 20-second barrier in the 200m is one of the defining marks of world-class sprinting — a threshold that few ever cross. Now, for the first time in history, an Australian has done it. Teenage sensation Gout Gout has etched his name into the record books, becoming the first-ever Australian to achieve the feat. Stopping the clock at a wind-assisted 19.98 (+3.6) in the Under-20 200m final of the Queensland State Championships, he made history just hours after turning heads with a world leading time of 20.05 (+1.2) in the heats.



Bangladesh Football Federation president Tabith Awal (L) shakes hands with United Commercial Bank's managing director and CEO Mohammad Mamdudur Rashid (R) as the bank's chairman Sharif Zahir watches on during an MoU signing ceremony at the bank's head office in Dhaka yesterday. Both parties hoped that the financial package would help improve the national men's football team.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Sohan, Shadman tons keep Dhanmondi, Agrani on course



SPORTS REPORTER

Nurul Hasan Sohan hit an unbeaten 132 to ensure a 97-run win for Dhanmondi Sports Club against Shineepukur Cricket Club at BKSP-4 in the Dhaka Premier League yesterday.

Batting first, Habibur Rahman struck a 42-ball 45 at the top before Nurul took charge of the innings with his fifth List A ton. Nurul and Sunzamul (40) notched a 113-run fifth-wicket stand and the former remained unbeaten on 132 off 131 deliveries to take Dhanmondi to 277 for nine. In reply, Shineepukur were skittled out for 180 as pacer Kamrul bagged three for 23 while Sunzamul scalped four for 49 for Dhanmondi.

Agrani Bank picked up their third successive win, beating Rupganj Tigers Cricket Club by seven wickets, courtesy of Shadman Islam's unbeaten 115.

Amit Majumder, who had been amongst the runs, hit 81 while Asadullah Galib managed 57 as Rupganj reached 260 all out. Ruyel Miah and Taibur Rahman both bagged three wickets each for Agrani.

In reply, Shadman's 108-ball 115 and Imrul Kayes' 58-ball 62 saw Agrani coast to win in 44.5 overs, keeping their fourth spot in the standings.

Gulshan Cricket Club enjoyed second successive win by beating Partex Sporting Club by 57 runs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur. Liton Das scored 22 on his return after being rested due to cramp in the earlier match while Azizul Hakim's 62 at the top saw Gulshan reach 221 for nine.

Spinners Nihad Uzzaman and Naeem Islam bagged two wickets apiece as Gulshan maintained winning run.

With Abahani, Gazi Group, Mohammedan and Agrani at the top of the table with four wins each, the DPL standings look tight as the season wears on.

## Time for the experienced bunch to finally step up



ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Who are the seniors in Bangladesh cricket?

Ask any avid Bangladesh cricket fan or expert this question at this moment, and the answer will likely include Mahmudullah Riyad, Mushfiqur Rahim, and Tamim Iqbal.

Interestingly, these three, alongside Shakib Al Hasan and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza — all part of Bangladesh's 'Big Five' — have been the senior figures in Bangladesh cricket for decades. This raises a debate: Why hasn't the batch that followed them been considered seniors, even after nearly a decade of international experience?

The answer lies in how this group was managed by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), particularly in ODIs.

When Mushfiqur started his career, his record was far from what it is today, with 7,795 ODI runs before retiring from the format. With 274 ODIs played, it may seem like there was no incubation period for him. However, the reality is that players

## A major T20 league on the horizon!

AGENCIES

Saudi Arabia is secretly planning a new global T20 cricket league, which could mark one of the most significant changes in the sport for decades.

According to a report in the Sydney Morning Herald, the league has been in development for over a year and is the brainchild of former New South Wales and Victoria all-rounder Neil Maxwell, who also manages current Australian captain Pat Cummins.

Saudi Arabia's SRJ Sports Investments will serve as the main financer of the yet-to-be-named T20 league, backing it with a substantial investment of \$500 million.

The report also highlights that discussions are already underway with the International Cricket Council (ICC), which is currently chaired by former BCCI secretary Jay Shah. If realized, this initiative would significantly bolster Saudi Arabia's growing influence in global sports.

This latest move aligns with Saudi Arabia's broader sports expansion strategy, which already includes investments in LIV Golf, a Formula 1 race, and hosting rights for the 2034 FIFA World Cup. The introduction of a

like Mushfiqur, who have long held the senior tag, were given time to develop early on.

This raises the question: Did the next generation receive the same patience from selectors?

In his first two years of ODIs, Mushfiqur averaged just above 20 in 29 innings, scoring 476 runs at a strike rate of 56.06.

Comparatively, Towhid Hridoy, who debuted in 2023, accumulated 984 runs in two years at an average of 35.14 in 31

innings.

Even accounting for differences in eras and opposition strength, Mushfiqur required patience before his numbers improved. Three years into his ODI career, his stats surged. Between 2009 and 2011, he scored 1,270 runs in 36

innings at an average of over 35 and a strike rate of 94.5, with more significant contributions.

Soumya Sarkar, who debuted in 2014, made match-winning contributions early on. However, in 11 years, he has played only 76 ODIs — having been dropped mostly due to inconsistency. In his first

two years, Soumya scored 723 runs at an average of 42.52 and a strike rate of 100.4.

Among top-order batters (positions 1-3) who played at least 10 matches in that period, Soumya had the sixth-best strike rate globally. He averaged more than

Chris Gayle and Quinton de Kock, who had superior strike rates in that category.

In the case of Tamim, he played 53

innings during his initial years, scoring 1,370 runs at an average of just over 25.

Tamim, Mushfiqur, and Shakib belonged to a transformative era in Bangladesh cricket, where the team was shedding its 'minnows' tag and competing against stronger sides. ODI cricket was also

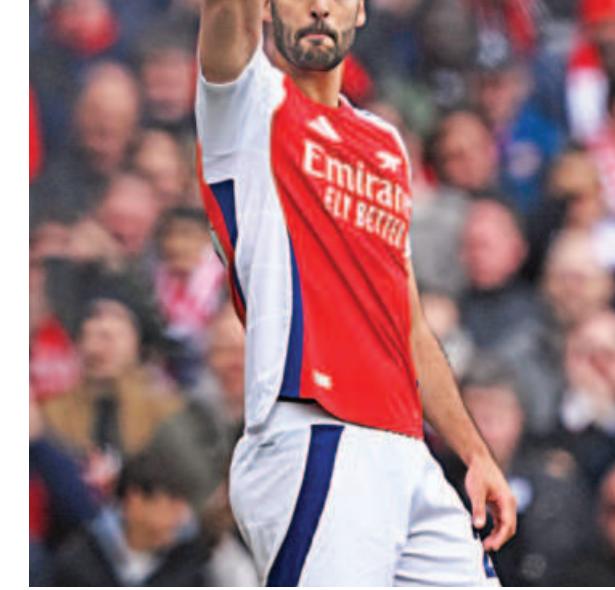
evolving, and Bangladesh's current veterans grew with it with plenty of patience provided by selectors.

However, Bangladesh cricket did not

afford the same caution or planning to the next batch, including Soumya, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Taskin Ahmed, and Liton Das.

Recently, Soumya remarked that,

despite 11 years in international cricket, they haven't been recognised as seniors.



Arsenal defeated London rivals Chelsea 1-0 for their first win in four Premier League games on Sunday as a headed goal by stand-in striker Mikel Merino boosted their faint hopes of catching up with runaway leaders Liverpool. The win left second-placed Arsenal 12 points behind Liverpool.

AGENCIES

## Mbappe dismisses 'Ronaldo and Cristiano' comparisons

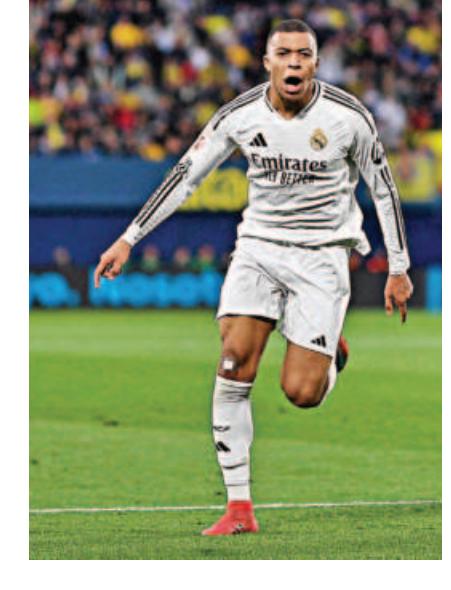
AGENCIES

In a season filled with expectations, Kylian Mbappe continues to shatter records and silence doubters. His brace in Real Madrid's 2-1 comeback victory over Villarreal on Saturday not only secured crucial points in the LaLiga title race but also cemented his place in Madrid's rich footballing history.

With 31 goals across all competitions this season, Mbappe has now surpassed Brazilian icon Ronaldo's tally from his debut campaign in 2002-03. Brazil's Ronaldo scored 30 goals in 44 games in his debut season with Real Madrid in 2002-03.

The French forward is closing in on another milestone — the 33 goals scored by Cristiano Ronaldo in 35 games in his first season with Los Blancos in 2009-10. Yet, for Mbappe, who has played 44 games for Real Madrid so far, it's not just about records — it's about legacy.

"They are legends who have defined an era," Mbappe told Real Madrid TV. "It's important, but they are just numbers. If I score more than Ronaldo and Cristiano, it doesn't mean I'm bigger — just that my first season is going well. The most important thing is to help the



team win titles."

His determination was evident against Villarreal, especially after Madrid's grueling 120-minute battle against Atletico Madrid. Despite exhaustion, the squad showed resilience, with Mbappe leading the charge.

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## Yunus to discuss law and order with top cops today

Says press wing; CA will meet Xi on Mar 28 during China visit

### AGENCIES

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus will hold a special meeting today with senior police officers on law and order issues.

A total of 127 officers, including those holding the rank of superintendent of police, will attend the meeting at the Chief Adviser's Office in Tejgaon.

Yunus will listen to field-level officials and give necessary directives regarding law and order, CA's Deputy Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad Majumder said at a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday.

Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam will deliver a welcome speech while six field-level officers will speak on six focal points.

Speaking at the briefing, CA's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said Yunus' scheduled visit to China from March 26-29 would be the "most important visit" by a Bangladeshi leader over the last 50 years as the two countries were eyeing to take the relations to a new height.

He said that Prof Yunus will address the Boao Forum for Asia conference, called the "Davos of the East", on March 27 with the focus on the changing role of Asia in



SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Govt seeks to withdraw over 6,000 'political' cases

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has recommended withdrawal of 6,202 "politically motivated" cases filed to harass opposition leaders and activists during the Awami League government.

The home ministry disclosed the updates in a press release yesterday.

The central committee formed by the home ministry has reviewed 6,295 cases submitted by field-level committees for evaluation. Of these, 6,202 were identified as politically motivated and recommended for withdrawal," read the release.

To assess the proposals received from the field-level committees, the central committee held eight meetings, presided over by the law adviser.

The senior secretary of the home ministry was also in the seven-member central committee, which was formed on September 22 last year.

A four-member committee, headed by the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

## Penalise wealthy tax dodgers

Economists urge govt at pre-budget talks, call for formulating law

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Economists urged the government yesterday to introduce legislation targeting individuals capable of paying taxes but avoiding their obligations.

With a view to broadening the base of taxpayers and improving tax collection efficiency, this proposal was presented during the first pre-budget meeting for Fiscal Year 2025-26, which was held at the State Guest House Padma in the capital with Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed in attendance.

Salehuddin Ahmed, addressing reporters after the meeting, said, "I did not commit to it [enacting the law to punish tax dodgers] as there are legal implications. Such laws exist in other countries with provisions to sue tax dodgers."

At the meeting, he said the experts suggested the interim government devise a framework for future administrations to follow.

They recommended imposing higher tax rates on individuals owning multiple properties or vehicles and maintaining significant bank deposits.

**"We have recommended avoiding an ambitious budget this time around."**

Salehuddin Ahmed  
Finance Adviser

Other recommendations include expanding the social safety net, prioritising allocation to more research-oriented universities, and ensuring proper utilisation of allocation to the primary education sector.

Regarding the size of the upcoming budget, Salehuddin said, "We have recommended avoiding an ambitious budget this time around."

The finance adviser said the government has plans to reduce inflation to 6.5 by next year.

At the meeting, Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), proposed a specific law to tackle tax evasion.

He also recommended a detailed evaluation of government expenditure to ensure efficiency and the introduction of impact-based budgeting.

Professor MM Akash advocated for the rationing of essential commodities for garment workers and recommended property taxes for those with extensive assets.

Economists further called for a shift

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

**JULY MASSACRE**  
Tarique promises trials if voted to power

### UNB, Dhaka

If BNP is voted to power, the party would bring those responsible for the torture and killing during the anti-autocratic movement and the 2024 mass uprising under trial, said BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman today.

"We can firmly say if the people of Bangladesh give BNP the opportunity to govern in the future, we will ensure trials for all incidents of killings and repression," he said while addressing an iftar event virtually at a city hotel.

Tarique assured that the party would make every effort, alongside various political programmes, to ensure justice for those affected and for those subjected to repression and killings during the anti-autocratic movements and the July-August mass uprising.

Amra BNP Paribar organised the event at Lakeshore Hotel for the families of the victims of enforced disappearances and killings during the Awami League regime, as well as for the martyrs of the 2024 mass uprising.

Gifts were also distributed among the victim families at the event.

The BNP acting chief said both the party and the nation expect a fair and neutral



SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

## US strikes kill 31 in Yemen

101 people, mostly women and children, injured; Huthis vow retaliation

### AFP, Sanaa

Yemen's Iran-backed Huthis yesterday vowed to meet "escalation with escalation" after a wave of deadly US air strikes, with witnesses to the bombing saying they were taken aback by its intensity, even after years of war.

US President Donald Trump said he had ordered the strikes and threatened more were to come if the rebels kept up their repeated attacks on shipping vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Attacks on the rebel-held capital Sanaa, as well as on areas in Saada, Al Bayda and Rada, killed at least 31 people and wounded 101, "most of whom were children and women", Huthi health ministry spokesperson Anis Al Asbahi said.

An AFP photographer in Sanaa heard explosions and saw plumes of smoke rising Saturday night.

Footage on Huthi media showed children and a woman among those being treated in a hospital emergency room, including a dazed girl with blackened legs wrapped in bandages.

One father of two, who gave his name as Ahmed, told AFP his "house shook, the windows shattered, and my family and I were terrified".

"I've been living in Sanaa for 10 years, hearing shelling throughout the war. By God, I've never experienced anything like this before," he said.

Trump, in a post on social media, vowed to "use overwhelming lethal force" to end the Huthi attacks, which the rebels say are in solidarity with Palestinians amid the Gaza war.

"To all Houthi terrorists, YOUR TIME IS UP, AND YOUR ATTACKS MUST STOP, STARTING TODAY. IF THEY DON'T, HELL WILL RAIN DOWN UPON YOU LIKE NOTHING YOU HAVE EVER SEEN BEFORE!" he said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Trump warns Iran against backing the Yemeni group

Iran Guards vow to retaliate against any attack

Russia urges US not to use force in Yemen and begin dialogue



Illegal businesses selling refurbished second-hand furniture occupy pavements and spill over onto the street, causing inconvenience to pedestrians. The photo was taken yesterday near the Shilpakala Academy in the capital's Segunbagicha.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## 3 months all alone on a wide wide sea!

### AFP, Lima

A Peruvian fisherman was found alive after drifting at sea for 94 days, a navy official said Saturday, as he was discharged from hospital following his ordeal.

Maximo Napa, 61, was rescued in his small fishing boat on Tuesday after being spotted by an Ecuadorian vessel off the coast of Chimbote in northern Peru.

He told local media in a tearful interview that he survived at sea by eating cockroaches, birds and a turtle.

"I didn't want to die, for my mother. I have a two-month-old granddaughter -- I clung to that. Every day I thought about my mother," Napa said.

On Saturday, he was discharged from hospital in the coastal city of Paita.

"Mr Napa arrived in good physical condition. He could walk, wash himself. Shocked, but in good physical condition," said Peruvian Navy port captain Jorge Gonzalez.

The fisherman had set sail on December 7 from the port of San Juan de Marcona but bad weather conditions and the current caused him to lose course.

His small boat, which had no radio beacon, ended up on the high seas.

"It is a miracle that my father has been found," his daughter Ines Napa told the RPP radio station.

