



BSCL seeks
partnership
to fast-track
Starlink's entry
B1



AL's downfall
and the politics
of cognitive
dissonance
P9



What's
impeding the
reforms in
Bangladesh?
P8



Macedonia
nightclub fire
kills 59
P7

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.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

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