



Trump was the first and so far, I think, the only one among Western leaders who repeatedly, with conviction, ... stated that it was a huge mistake to pull Ukraine into Nato.
Sergei Lavrov
Russian foreign minister

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TO KNOW

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Try Israel for genocide

Colossal Dhaka rally for Gaza urges international community

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mammoth rally in the capital yesterday protested the Israeli atrocities in Gaza and called for the recognition of Palestine as a state and Israel's trial for genocide.

A declaration from the event titled the March for Gaza urged countries around the world to sever all types of agreements and ties with Israel.

Organised by a platform named Palestine Solidarity Movement, Bangladesh, the rally was attended by a massive number of people including leaders of major political parties, Islamic groups and scholars and people from a cross-section of the society.

Asking for immediate global action, Mahmudur Rahman, editor of the daily Amar Desh, read out the declaration at the rally in the Suhrawardy Udyan. "We believe Palestine is not merely a territory, it is part of the identity of the Muslim Ummah. And Gaza is not just a war-torn city. It is a painful reflection of our collective failure," reads the declaration.

The rally was a powerful display of solidarity and unity, with a gigantic Palestinian tricolour taking the centre stage at the venue.

People had started to gather at the venue from the morning. By noon, the entire 95 acre Suhrawardy Udyan was teeming with people, many of whom wore the iconic chequered kelfiyeh, a symbol of Palestinian identity and resistance immortalised by Yasser Arafat.

They pledged unwavering support for the cause as the Palestinian tricolour and the Bangladeshi Red and Green fluttered side by side, creating a striking visual of camaraderie.

Tens of thousands chanted "Naraye Takbir, Allahu Akbar", "Free, Free Palestine", and the resonant, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free".

The crowd also raised their voices against atrocities with slogans like "One, two, three, four, genocide no more."



Tens of thousands of people gather in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan as part of the 'March for Gaza' programme yesterday to express solidarity with the Palestinians and to demand action against Israeli atrocities.

PHOTO: STAR

The people pledged unwavering support for the cause as the Palestinian tricolour and the Bangladeshi Red and Green fluttered side by side, creating a striking visual of camaraderie.



The venue was adorned with colourful banners and festoons, each carrying messages of hope, resistance, and solidarity.

As the crowd swelled beyond capacity, the organisers had to make an announcement to halt further processions into the Suhrawardy Udyan.

But by then, the rally had gathered an unstoppable momentum and people kept joining it—many climbed trees to catch a glimpse of the stage, refusing to miss out on this historic moment.

As the event drew to a close, thousands who couldn't find space at the venue began to disperse.

Police said that although it was a weekend, the demonstration impacted traffic on almost all major roads in the capital, leading to severe congestion in many areas.

Some streets, however, remained relatively empty.

The rally, moderated by Maulana Abdul Hye Mohammad Saifullah, began around 3:15pm with recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by the screening of a documentary on atrocities of Israel.

BNP Standing Committee Member Salah Uddin Ahmed, Senior Joint Secretary General Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Annie, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar, Naye-e-Ameer of Islami Andolan Bangladesh Syed Faizul Karim, Islami Oikya Jote Secretary General Mawlana Sakawat Hossain Raji, Ameer of Khelafat Majlish

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PRICE WAR IN THE GARMENT SECTOR

Exporters fear a race to the bottom

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh's \$40 billion garment industry, the lifeblood of its economy, faces further uneven price competition as a US-led tariff war threatens to reshape global apparel trade flows. With China, Vietnam and Cambodia vying for market share in Europe and beyond, Bangladeshi exporters fear a race to the bottom on prices—one they may not win.

If the tariff is not reduced during the 90-day reprieve announced by US President Donald Trump, American buyers are likely to push Bangladeshi suppliers for even lower prices to make up for the extra cost of clearing goods through customs.

Bangladesh also faces competition from its South Asian neighbours, India and Pakistan, both of which enjoy lower duty rates and are therefore positioned to supply at more competitive prices, putting further pressure on Bangladesh. Then there are Egypt and Kenya, two emerging suppliers that face lower tariffs on garment exports to the US than Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, heavily penalised China, facing tariffs as high as 145 percent, is expected to redirect excess capacity to alternative markets such as the EU and Japan. Vietnam may follow a similar path. This diversion is likely to intensify competition in Europe and Asia, driving down prices and further eroding Bangladesh's market

share and profit margins in those regions.

The tariff-induced strain may ripple through the value chain. US consumers could face price hikes on apparel, potentially dampening demand and triggering a slowdown that would directly affect suppliers in Bangladesh.

Historically, international retailers and brands have paid lower prices for Bangladeshi garments — offering \$6-\$7 for a T-shirt that would command \$10 if made in China or Vietnam.

Bangladesh currently ranks as the second-largest garment exporter to Europe. In terms of volume, it has surpassed China as the EU's largest supplier, shipping nearly \$25 billion worth of garments a year. However, this leadership position is at risk as global brands intensify pressure for price reductions amid the ongoing trade conflict.

Historically, international retailers and brands have paid lower prices for Bangladeshi garments — offering \$6-\$7 for a T-shirt that would command \$10 if made in China or

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Speed up reforms for polls between Dec and June

Yunus urges consensus commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday told the National Consensus Commission to expedite the reform initiatives with the goal of holding the national election between December and June 2026.

Yunus, also chairman of the commission, made the call during a meeting with the commission's Vice-Chairman Prof Ali Riaz and member Badiul Alam Majumdar at his official residence, Jamuna, in the afternoon.

Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser (Consensus Building) Monir Haider was also present, said Chief Adviser's Press Wing in a release.

During the meeting, Prof Ali Riaz and Badiul Alam Majumdar apprised Yunus of the progress of the commission's activities.

They informed him that separate discussions with political parties were ongoing about the recommendations of various reform commissions.

As of yesterday, discussions with eight parties have been completed.

A meeting with the BNP is scheduled for Thursday, they told the chief adviser.

They further said that various programmes have been undertaken to assess public opinion on reforms and raise awareness on the matter.



CCTV shows man torching 'portrait of fascism'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police believe the fire that burnt the "Portrait of Fascism" motif for Anondo Shobhajatra at Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts was "a deliberate act". A young man in black T-shirt, brown pants, and sandals, his hair tied in a bun, was seen setting fire to the motif early in the morning yesterday, police said.

Another motif, the "Dove of Peace", was also partially burnt in the fire.

After reviewing CCTV footage, police and university authorities said the youth entered and exited the premises by climbing the central gate between 4:44am and 4:46am before heading towards the Chhobir Haat gate of Suhrawardy Udyan.

DU Proctor Associate Prof Saifuddin Ahmed said the suspect first poured a liquid—presumably flammable—and then moved out of the camera's view behind a curtain. "The footage then showed flames. He likely tested it with a lighter," the proctor added.

SN Md Nazrul Islam, additional commissioner (Crime and Operations) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said, "The fire was no accident. We're certain it was deliberate."

When asked about the suspect's identity, he said it was too early to name anyone in particular. Police would collect

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Influential individuals use excavators to illegally extract soil from the dried-up bed of the Bonshai river in Mirzapur upazila of Tangail, raising the risk of erosion that could endanger a nearby bridge and surrounding villages. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

JULY ATROCITIES

No arrest without evidence or prior permission

DMP orders cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police officers must obtain approval from higher authorities before arresting any accused in cases filed over the killings and other atrocities during the mass uprising, according to an official order of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Additionally, police must have evidence to justify such arrests, said the order issued on April 9.

"In most of the cases, [filed after the uprising] a large number of individuals have been accused. Before arresting anyone named in the FIR [First Information Report] or identified during investigation, investigators must present credible evidence, such as statements from victims, eyewitness testimony, relevant video/audio footage or photographs, or call records or CDRs," reads the order.

Contacted, DMP Joint Commissioner Faruk Hossain said, "We received some complaints that people who had no involvement in the crimes were being harassed in these cases."

Moreover, some of the FIRs have major flaws, he said.

Under normal circumstances, SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

MY DHAKA

Baishakh adventures await, are you ready?

RBR

This year's Pahela Baishakh celebrations will be lacklustre, as many pundits suggest. But I beg to differ, for I think your culture and cultural celebrations have nothing to do with religion or politics. It is a spring harvest celebration in most rice-cultivating countries in southern Asia. In each country, the name and face of the celebrations are done according to their culture and traditions.

In Myanmar, it is the ceremony of the Thingyan Water Festival. In Cambodia, the elders cleanse statues of the Buddha with perfumed water. There is Flour throwing in Laos, while Biska Jatra signifies the start of the Nepali New Year; all these celebrations fall on, or around the April 14th in the Bangla calendar. The Bangla calendar is also known as the lunisolar calendar, where days and important dates are marked by the motions or effects of the sun and moon.

I always argue that while geographical location influences your culture and traditions, it is also multifaceted and depends on many factors like economy, history, geography, and social interactions. This may be a research and thesis topic for social scientists. Let's just leave it at that. Instead, let us jot down fun things we can do this new year, joy that will cost you almost nothing.

A rickshaw ride after sundown is number one on my list. Though the



motorised ones are scary, if you are up for a bit of recklessness, then take the plunge. This rickshaw's racing speed, and the summer evening breeze together give you a small dose of adrenaline rush. But enough to lift your spirits, this rickshaw ride can be hired for an hourly fee, in all areas of the city.

Then the second must-try would be popping balloons with those rickety air guns at Baishakh mela or fairs. In fact, most open spaces in and around the city suburbs have pop-up fairs. It was installed during Eid, and it will continue till the Baishakh festivities are done.

Diya Bari in Uttara is dotted with colourful fairs. Adventurous rides like the pirate ship are a hot favourite with

kids, teens, and young adults, waiting in a long queue to enjoy the surfing experience. On a regular day, the ticket is a mere Tk 30, but on special occasions, it hikes up to Tk 80. Many get tickets for three rides at a stretch, sit at the edge, and come down all wobbly and dizzy. Besides these, there are traditional wooden nagordolas, and mechanical Ferris wheels, carousels, and bumper cars, plus more

Kulfi and Ice Gola is a must-have on a scorching Baishakhi noon, and it is third on my list. The creamy frozen dessert, kulfi is sold in big hari or pots covered with a red cloth. These vendors are found around the university campus and public spaces.

Besides the Baishakh staple snacks of batasha, murali, and coconut naru, you must try the crushed ice, charred green mango or kacha aam mocktail, the chilled lemonade from the season's

best lemon harvest, the gondhoraj lebu r shorbot, and salted lassi, but all these juice spritzers must be made at home because homemade ones are extra refreshing.

My fourth choice on the to-do list is a bit off track from the usual fun list and it requires putting in an effort, but it is so worth the try. If you are in the university area, then take a ride to Nazimuddin Road. It is the lane that leads towards the Central Jail Museum in Old Dhaka; there you have Nasu Faruker Bakorkhani Bakery. Delicious bakhorkhani or Shuka Ruti is a traditional old Dhaka savoury, and we have all had them in assorted flavours.

But the slight twist that I am hinting at here is that you eat a freshly baked, hot from the oven, melt-in-your-mouth Bakorkhani. It is a treat like no other; the salted or sweet doughs, just off the tandoor, is a notch up there in gastronomical indulgences.

If you can, add a slice of Dhaka paneer to this, then heaven is right there, even in this blistering Chaitra-Baishakh heat.

Don't forget to visit the fine arts faculty premises; the atmosphere there around this time of the year is electrifying. Masks and Baishakh crafts make for great gifts for friends who live abroad.

Baishakh lunch is mandatory, and if you are hosting one, then please shuffle the set menu this year. Opt for phena bhaat, a slack rice dish with vegetables, and try curd rice, known generally as doi panta.

Don't forget the jasmine garlands; after all, what is summer without jasmynes and frangipanis? Enjoy the colours of your culture and celebrate your cultural identity.

Army chief back home after Russia, Croatia tour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Chief of Army Staff General Waker-uz-Zaman returned home yesterday after holding wide-ranging discussions on defence cooperation, training exchange, regional security, and joint military initiatives during his official visits to Russia and Croatia.

During the tour, the army chief met top military and civilian officials, including Russia's deputy defence minister, the chief of the Russian army, and the chief of the Croatian armed forces, said the Inter Services Public Relations in a release.

According to the ISPR notification, Waker met Russian Deputy Defence Minister General A Fomin on April 7. They discussed matters of mutual interest, including military-to-military cooperation, training support, bilateral relations, mutual confidence-building, skilled manpower export to Russia, higher education, regional security, and prospects for joint training.

The next day, he paid a courtesy call on General Oleg Salyukov, chief of the Russian army. Their discussions focused on future plans for defence cooperation agreements, training assistance, trainee exchanges between military institutions, and joint training initiatives.

Bangladeshi man 'beaten to death by BSF' Family claims

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

A Bangladeshi man has allegedly been beaten to death by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at the Palianpur border in Maheshpur upazila of Jhenaidah.

The deceased is Wasim Hossain, 35, a resident of Baghdadanga village in the upazila, said Faiz Uddin Mridha, officer-in-charge of Maheshpur Police Station.

Locals and family members on Friday alleged that Wasim was killed by BSF personnel and his body was dumped in the Ichhamati river.

Friday afternoon, a farmer from Hudapara village spotted a body floating in the river on the Indian side of the border and alerted authorities.

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) later arrived at the scene but could not immediately identify or recover the body.

Wasim's identity was confirmed later around 10:30pm on Friday, after his companions, who had reportedly crossed into India with him on April 8, identified the body.

Wasim's elder brother, Mehedi Hasan, said, "My brother had been missing for the past three to four

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Try Israel for genocide

FROM PAGE 1

Mawlana Mamunul Haque, President of Gono Odhikar Parishad Nurul Haque Nur and Chief Organiser (Southern Region) of the National Citizen Party (NCP) Hasnat Abdullah, attended the programme.

Ilias Kanchan, founder and chairman of Nirapad Sarak Chai, Chhatra Shibir President Zahedul Islam and others were present on stage.

Islamic speaker Mizanur Rahman Azhari and As-Sunnah Foundation Chairperson Sheikh Ahmadullah spoke at the programme.

Ahmadullah said people of all political stripes, ideologies, and schools of thought in Bangladesh stood in solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine and Gaza.

"Today, by standing together, we want to show the world that although we may have differences in opinion and ideology, every person in Bangladesh, regardless of religion or ethnicity, expresses solidarity with the Palestinian people's right to freedom and ownership of their land," said Ahmadullah.

Azhari said, "Geographically, we may be far from Palestine, but today's sea of people proves that every heart here carries a Palestine, every heart carries a Gaza, every heart carries an Al-Quds."

He described the crowd as a powerful expression of Bangladesh's love for Palestine and Al-Aqsa.

In a unique protest performance near Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts, a person wearing a mask of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu walked with a bowl of symbolic blood in his hands, his body covered in blood.

Beside him, another performer with a US President Donald Trump mask walked in support of Netanyahu, also stained with blood-like marks.

Meanwhile, performers dressed as Arab leaders hovered around them, kissing their hands and showing submission.

Trailing behind them were symbolic corpses wrapped in shrouds, meant to represent Palestinian victims, which were being dragged by Netanyahu, Trump, and the compliant Arab leaders.

One of the organisers said, "The occupying Israeli forces are committing genocide in Palestine with direct support from the Trump administration. The heads of Arab states remain completely indifferent despite witnessing these atrocities."

DECLARATION

The declaration called for a return to pre-1967 borders, international recognition of East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, an end to

temporary ceasefire rhetoric in favour of concrete and a clear resolution to guarantee the security and sovereignty of Palestine.

It also called on leaders of the Muslim world to cancel all existing agreements with Israel and cut diplomatic relations, impose trade embargoes and sanctions against Israel.

The declaration urged the Muslim community across the world to launch an active diplomatic campaign to isolate Israel.

They also demanded effective diplomatic stands against the state aggression under Hindutva rule in India, especially regarding the interference in Waqf laws and the denial of Muslim rights.

The declaration called upon the Bangladesh government to reinstate the 'Except Israel' clause in Bangladeshi passports and affirm the state's position of not recognising Israel as a state.

It also urged the government to revoke the agreements signed with all Israeli organisations.

"As a democratic state, the government has a responsibility to honour the moral convictions and aspirations of its people," it said, adding, "The people of Bangladesh have pledged solidarity with Gaza."

The declaration also called for implementing effective state-level measures to deliver humanitarian and medical assistance to Gaza.

It demanded that the government instruct all government institutions and import authorities to avoid products from Israel-affiliated companies.

The declaration urged the government to officially protest the persecution of Muslims and other minorities in India, alleging its alignment with the global Zionist agenda.

It also called for ensuring that the textbooks and national curricula include the history of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Palestinian resistance.

After the declaration, the event was concluded through a special prayer session led by Mufti Abdul Malek, Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque.

Since October 7, 2023, when Israel launched its offensive in Gaza, at least 50,933 Palestinians, mostly civilians, have been killed in the tiny territory. According to the United Nations, the offensive has left Gaza in ruins. It destroyed or damaged 69 percent of all structures in Gaza. At least 68 percent of the road network in the strip had been damaged or destroyed.

Adani plant

FROM PAGE 10

Vietnam. This pricing dynamic, while attracting bulk orders, has also forced many Bangladeshi exporters to operate on razor-thin margins. A Fair Wear Foundation study found that up to 39 percent of Bangladeshi garment exporters accept prices below production cost, often in hopes of maintaining long-term relationships with international buyers.

This lopsided pricing dynamic benefits international brands, which routinely sell Bangladeshi-sourced garments at a markup of as much as 400 percent, sometimes fetching \$25 per piece in Western markets despite sourcing them for \$5. Local representatives for these brands have acknowledged this profit margin.

The structural disadvantages facing Bangladesh, such as long lead times, inefficient production processes, inadequate infrastructure and logistics, and weak bargaining power, further constrain its ability to resist price suppression. Intense competition among too many domestic suppliers compounds the issue, as exporters underbid each other in saturated markets.

According to AK Azad, managing director of Ha Meem Group, which exports 90 percent of its production to the US, Bangladesh's average tariff

"To cover the shortfall, additional power is being generated from oil-based plants. If fuel supply is ensured, production can meet demand," said one of the officials.

Besides, the PDB has requested Petrobangla for additional gas supply to make up for the shortfall. In response, Petrobangla diverted gas supply from the fertiliser factories to the power sector.

Since Friday morning, the state-owned Chittagong Urea Fertiliser (CUFL) halted production as their gas supply was by the distributor company.

"We were informed that the gas supply would be suspended from Friday. So, we have shut down the plant accordingly," said CUFL's Managing Director Mizanur Rahman.

The ministry has instructed the suspension of gas supply to fertiliser factories for gas load management, said Shafiul Azam, general manager of Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company.

"That is why the gas supply to CUFL has been stopped," he added.

The demand for fertiliser is currently low but is expected to rise from July, said CUFL officials. At present, CUFL has a stock of 100,000 tonnes of urea fertiliser.

Bangladesh has a 25-year agreement signed in 2017 to purchase electricity generated from the Adani plant.

The plant started commercial production in April 2023. A committee by the interim government is currently reviewing the agreement with Adani.

No arrest without evidence

FROM PAGE 1

investigating officers are authorised to arrest an accused.

After the fall of the Awami League government amid a mass uprising on August 5 last year, hundreds of murder cases were filed in different parts of the country.

Rights activists and lawyers pointed out at the time that the complaints were designed more to harass the accused than to ensure justice for the atrocities.

Officers found in preliminary investigations that many of the accused had nothing to do with the crimes.

So far, more than 1,500 such dubious cases have been filed across the country, according to police data.

On September 10, police headquarters issued a separate directive stating that no government official or employee can be arrested unless there was concrete evidence.

Exporters fear a race to the bottom

FROM PAGE 1

rate remains high at 26 percent, with a 10 percent baseline, which is still steeper than those faced by India or Pakistan. This differential gives regional competitors an edge, especially in a price-sensitive environment.

While the full impact of the tariff regime will become clearer over the next two to three months, exporters are already grappling with heightened price pressure, Azad said. Buyers are beginning to demand that Bangladeshi suppliers absorb part of the new US tariffs, cutting further into already tight margins.

Faruque Hassan, managing director of Giant Group and former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said buyers are asking suppliers to share the cost burden of the 10 percent universal tariff. He warned that rising retail prices in the US may depress consumption, which would again reverberate down the supply chain.

Former BGMEA president Rubana Huq echoed these concerns, saying US buyers are most likely going to ask the suppliers to share the extra cost that will fall on the American consumers.

"There may be serious undercutting among ourselves as all US suppliers will try and secure their exports to the US, the fastest growing market," she said.

"There may also be Cambodia and

Vietnam dropping their prices for not only the US but also the EU, as they too will need to fill their capacities," she said. Additionally, India, Pakistan, and Turkey enjoy an advantage in the imposing and pausing of tariffs by the US.

Exporters have reported that retailers are rushing to ship goods within the 90-day pause in the tariff schedule, using the window to push through orders at reduced prices. One exporter, who ships 60 percent of his production to the US, confirmed that brands are pressuring factories to agree to lower rates under the current uncertainty.

Some exporters remain cautiously optimistic that Bangladesh could capture a portion of the orders shifting away from China due to the US tariff hikes.

"Trump mainly targeted China with the tariff increase, so there's a window of opportunity for Bangladesh," said one exporter, speaking on condition of anonymity. "But we must act quickly and negotiate better terms."

However, any opportunity that arises is likely to come with reduced prices. Buyers are already signalling that while they may shift sourcing to Bangladesh, they expect deeper discounts to offset tariff-related costs, undermining any potential gains.

CCTV shows man torching 'portrait of fascism'

FROM PAGE 1

more footage and conduct forensic analysis to identify him, he said.

Pointing out that one of the burnt motifs depicted deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, he said, "It seems that, while burning that one, part of the dove motif also got burned. So, those who dislike that particular representation [Portrait of Fascism] may have done it."

"If we can detect the individual who started the fire, we will then be able to determine the masterminds and other people involved," he said.

Responding to another question about the security of the faculty premises after a visit to the scene, Nazrul said that with Dhaka University's proctorial team, usually 10 policemen are posted there – some at the gate, and three others inside the premises.

"Two members of that team may have gone to the mosque for prayers around 5:00am," he said, adding that the policemen would be questioned to know more details about their movement.

Nazrul also said that an investigation committee would "definitely" be formed.

In a Facebook post yesterday, Cultural Affairs Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki blamed Hasina's

"acolytes" for the fire and warned of consequences, vowing broader participation in the procession.

"Whether it is the soft Awami League or their B Team – they will have to face justice soon," Farooki said.



"Hasina's associates have made it clear that they do not want to see the people of Bangladesh come together in celebration. We are now more determined than ever, and we will participate in even greater numbers," he added.

Farooki also said many supporters of the July uprising told him recently that they felt this year's Anondo Shobhajatra procession is going to be "the most inclusive and distinct so far".

"Some also believed it would be better to exclude that grotesque face of fascism. We were weighing all

viewpoints and trying to gauge the university's stance."

"But after last night's attack, the presence of that monster has become all the more inevitable," he added.

Dr Md Azharul Islam Sheikh, member secretary of the central coordination committee of Nababarsha 1432 celebration, said that students have already started rebuilding the "Dove of Peace" motif.

However, the motif depicting a monstrous fascist figure was completely destroyed, making it nearly impossible to reconstruct in a single day, Azharul told The Daily Star, adding that discussions were still ongoing regarding its reconstruction.

The DU administration has formed a five-member committee headed by Prof Dr Mohammad Siddiqui Rahman Khan, dean of the Faculty of Arts, to investigate the incident.

Other members include Prof Dr Mohammad Ekramul Haque, acting dean of the Faculty of Law; Prof Dr Mosadddek Hossain Kamal, director of the ICT Cell; and assistant proctors Md Israfil and Dr AKM Nur Alam Siddiqui.

Khaled Mansur, officer-in-charge of Shabbagh Police Station, said the university administration filed a case against unidentified accused over the incident. "We're investigating it," he said.

জন্য ও নিরাপদে টেমিট্যান্স পাঠান
প্রিয়জনকে প্রয়োজনে...

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Thousands thronged Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday for the 'March for Gaza' rally, voicing solidarity with the Palestinian people and protesting Israeli aggression. In front of the stage, participants held replicas of bodies -- symbolising the killing of Gazans, including children, by Israeli forces. The 95-acre venue was packed by noon as crowds poured in with calls for justice, marching through key streets of the capital, including Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue and the Sonargaon intersection, waving Palestinian and Bangladeshi flags. Many also gathered at the Raju Memorial Sculpture on the Dhaka University campus beforehand, carrying messages of hope, resistance, and unity.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN, PALASH KHAN, ANISUR RAHMAN

From Dhaka, for Gaza

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

"Who are you? Who am I? Palestine, Palestine!"

The slogan rang out across central Dhaka as thousands marched under the blazing sun yesterday, expressing solidarity with Palestinians amid Israel's continued assault on Gaza.

The "March for Gaza," organised by the Palestine Solidarity Movement, transformed Suhrawardy Udyan and its surrounding streets into a sea of people.

Waving the red-green and black-white flags of Bangladesh and Palestine, demonstrators carried placards that read "Free Palestine", "Gaza Drenched in Blood -- Why is the World Silent?", and "Stop the Genocide".

Many had draped Palestinian flags over their shoulders, while others marched in silence carrying symbolic coffins or mannequins wrapped in white shrouds, representing the innocent lives lost in Gaza.

Although the official programme was scheduled to begin at 3:15pm at Suhrawardy Udyan, people started arriving in processions from early morning.

The crowd swelled as the day wore on, with participants joining from Shahbagh, TSC, Matsya Bhaban, and Doel Chattar.

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Festivity in air as Boisabi begins



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

With the first light of day casting a golden hue over the Sangu river, members of the Chakma and Tanchangya communities gathered near Bandarban town yesterday morning to mark the beginning of Boisabi -- one of the most significant cultural festivals in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Carrying vibrant floral offerings arranged on banana leaves, participants of all ages arrived in traditional attire well before sunrise. The occasion began at precisely 7:00am with the lighting of candles and a solemn flower-offering ritual known as Phool Biju and Phool Bisu, dedicated to the river deity Jolbuddho and Mother Ganga.

Flowers, collected at dawn from surrounding areas, were gently set afloat on the river's shimmering surface. As they did so, participants offered prayers, seeking forgiveness for past transgressions and wishing for peace and prosperity in the new year. The flowing river, in turn, symbolically carried away their sorrows.

"We observe Phool Biju by seeking forgiveness from Jolbuddho and Mother Ganga and praying for peace and happiness in the coming year," said Siddhartha Chakma, standing by the riverside.

Minoti Chakma, who also joined the ritual, said, "I ask for forgiveness and seek blessings for a peaceful and happy new year. I take part in this flower-offering ceremony every year."

Najib Tanchangya echoed the sentiment: "Like every year, we are celebrating Phool Biju and Phool Bisu by offering flowers in the Sangu river and praying for a peaceful life ahead."

Celebrated by 11 indigenous communities including the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya, Mro, Khumi, and Khiyang, among others, Boisabi is the heart of the hill tracts' social and cultural identity. As the festival unfolds, joy and festivity ripple through Bandarban, Rangamati, and Khagrachhari.

In Bandarban, a week-long series of traditional events has been planned.

Today's highlights include a Sangrai rally and a prayer session for senior citizens. On April 14, Buddha statues will be ceremonially bathed in local temples, followed by the preparation of traditional pitha at night. April 15 will feature a Boli Khela (wrestling match) at Rajar Maath, and from April 16 to 18, the Marma community's Rilongpoi -- or Friendship Water Splashing Festival -- will be held at the same venue.

Throughout the week, different unions and villages across the seven upazilas of Bandarban will remain lively with local celebrations.



Increase lower court judges to 6,000

Recommends reform commission

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Judiciary Reform Commission has suggested increasing the number of lower court judges to at least 6,000 by appointing around 4,000 additional ones in order to bring the backlog of pending cases to a tolerable level.

The commission also proposed to appoint honest, efficient and healthy retired judges on contractual basis for a period of two to three years in the districts where at least 1,000 appeals or revision cases are pending.

The number of total judges for the lower courts is now 2,187, including 496 female judges. They are burdened with around 39 lakh pending cases. On average, a single judge is burdened with 1,783 cases, Supreme Court sources said.

"The number of judges should be increased step by step. With the increase in the number of judges, the necessary infrastructure, manpower and logistic support must be provided on an urgent basis," the commission said in its final report handed over to the chief adviser

on February 5.

The commission emphasised introduction of an effective local Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) system for resolving small disputes at village level and taking assistance of legal aid activities if necessary.

It also recommended establishing an independent Criminal Investigation Service for speedy and impartial investigations; taking necessary steps to improve the enrollment and quality of lawyers in due process; providing necessary infrastructure in all courts; allocating necessary budgets for the judiciary and keeping the executive as free as possible from control and proper decentralisation of the judiciary to reduce the case backlog.

The eight-member commission was formed on October 3 last year with former Appellate Division judge Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman as its chief.

Other members include retired HC judges Justice Emdadul Haque and Justice Farid Ahmed Shibli;

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

The number of total judges for the lower courts is now 2,187, including 496 female judges. They are burdened with around 39 lakh pending cases. On average, a single judge is burdened with 1,783 cases.

Don't equate July uprising with Liberation War

JASAD tells consensus commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Any move to equate the July 2024 uprising with the 1971 Liberation War in the constitution undermines the significance of the latter and is therefore unacceptable, Bangladesh Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JASAD) said yesterday.

The party made the statement during a meeting with the National Consensus Commission (NCC) at the LD Hall of the National Parliament. A JASAD delegation, led by General Secretary Nazmul Haque Prodhan, attended the meeting.

Mushtaq Hossain, a member of JASAD's standing committee, presented the party's proposals. He said while the 2024 uprising was important, it should not be compared with the Liberation War.

He also referred to the 1990 mass movement and said both events should be recognised in the constitution.

The party opposed any move to remove the Declaration of Independence and the March 7 speech from the constitution.

JASAD also disagreed with several proposed constitutional changes, including keeping "Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim" and the state religion at the start of the constitution. The party also rejected the idea of lowering the minimum age to contest elections from 25 to 21.

However, the party supported proposals

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Govt plans to resolve judge crisis soon

Says Asif Nazrul

BSS, Dhaka

The interim government will address the longstanding crises of judge shortage and logistics, said Law Adviser Asif Nazrul yesterday.

"There is indeed a crisis stemming from the shortage of judges and inadequate logistics. As we have only recently assumed office, the appointment of judges will take some time. However, these issues will be resolved during our tenure," he told journalists after inspecting the land acquired for the Chief Judicial Court in Bandarban.

Talking about the possibility of referring family court cases to arbitration, the law

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Fishing trawlers remain docked at the mouth of Chaktai canal in Chattogram city amid the ongoing "National Jataka Conservation Week," observed from April 8 to 14 to protect hilsa. The photo was taken recently.

Hold polls

FROM PAGE 5
Detective Branch in the capital's Gulshan area.
Farroque, a former opposition chief whip in Parliament, alleged that proper legal action was not being taken against AL leaders involved in misdeeds and looting.
The BNP leader said the cohorts of Awami League remained active within the administration, working to destabilise the country.
In such a situation, he urged the chief adviser to arrange a credible election as early as possible.
“We don't want a government like Hasina's. We don't want leaders like the former Awami League law minister or education minister in the future government. Give us an election that brings honest individuals to power,” he said.
Meanwhile, BNP Standing Committee Member Selima Rahman on Friday said, “We want fair elections. The home affairs adviser has said the country wants this government to stay for five years. But we know what the people really want.”

3 bodies

FROM PAGE 5
multiple stab wounds were found on his body and a blood-stained knife was also recovered from the scene.
“Based on the condition of the body, we suspect he was killed at least 36 hours ago. His home is in Kishoreganj, but we are investigating why he came to this area and how he was murdered,” he added.
According to Delowar's family, he was a driver by profession and lived in Gazipur. The family has yet to determine any motive behind the killing.
In another incident, police recovered the body of a newborn girl wrapped in cloth from an abandoned property in the Khaisar embankment area under Daudpur of the same upazila.

Promises made

FROM PAGE 5
“The river becomes rough during monsoon,” said Ismail Ali of Hamidpur. “Every year, one or two boats sink. Students cross this river daily. We've been hearing promises about a bridge for decades,” he said.
Md Kaysar Hamid, executive engineer of the Roads and Highways Department in Moulvibazar, said a survey for the main bridge has been completed and design work is currently underway.
A consultation firm, the Institute of Water Modelling (IWM), is conducting a study to determine the alignment of the approach roads on both sides, he said.

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A van driver transporting large bamboo baskets to the market. These baskets are made for day-to-day use and is sold wholesale for between Tk 100-300 depending on the size. The photo was taken in the Zero Point area of Khulna city recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Boro harvest in full swing in haors

Farmers start early amid fear of weather

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrokona

Farmers in Netrokona's haor areas have started harvesting Boro paddy ahead of the Bangla month of Baishakh, fearing possible inclement weather in the coming days, including rainfall and nor'westers.
This year, early-ripening Boro varieties were cultivated in the 134 small and large haors of the district, particularly in Madan, Mohanganj, and Khaliajuri upazilas.
The new varieties have matured earlier than those used last year, prompting farmers to begin harvesting sooner.
Hundreds of farmers were seen busy harvesting paddy yesterday in Dingapota and Jagannathpur haors in Mohanganj and Khaliajuri

upazilas.
Netrakona, known as a hub for Boro cultivation, relies heavily on its haor areas, which comprise about 25 percent of the district's arable land and supports the livelihoods of nearly 30 percent of its population.
According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Boro paddy has been cultivated on 1,85,460 hectares this year, including 41,075 hectares in haor areas. If the weather remains favourable, all the paddy in the haors can be harvested within the next 10 days.
“The weather has been good this year. The new varieties are also more disease-resistant. So, the yield seems higher. Now all we need is a good market price,” said Abdul Kaiyum Khan, a farmer

from the Dingapota Haor area.
Md Abdus Sakur Sadi, agriculture officer of Mohanganj upazila, said they encouraged farmers to plant high-yielding, pest and disease-resistant varieties such as BRRI Dhan-88, 89, 92, 96, 102, and BINA-25, which mature faster than the commonly used BRRI Dhan-29. “Farmers followed our advice, and we expect a bumper yield,” he added.
The Bangladesh Meteorological Department has warned that although rainfall is currently low, heavy rain of over 250mm is likely in border areas after April 17.
Md Nuruzzaman, deputy director of DAE in Netrokona, said, “Our production target this year is 12,62,000 tonnes, worth over Tk 3,155 crore at government-declared prices.”



Youth held over rape of 13-yr-old girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Police yesterday arrested a youth over the rape of a 13-year-old girl in Palash upazila in Narsingdi.
The arrestee, Ashik Dewan Shanto, 18, is from Shibpur upazila, said Md Monir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Palash Police Station.
The victim, a seventh grader, is a resident of Narsingdi Sadar upazila. According to police, she met the accused via TikTok and was reportedly in a relationship with him.
According to a complaint lodged by the victim's family, Ashik and one of his friends had taken the victim to Palash upazila on Friday, where they allegedly raped her.
Later, Ashik took her to a hospital at night as she fell ill.
On information, police went to the hospital, arrested Ashik, and handed him over to Palash Police Station, said the OC.
Police are trying to arrest his friend.
“The girl is currently undergoing treatment at the hospital. We will visit the spot and take necessary legal action,” The OC said.
He also said filing of a case in this connection is underway.

PRAYER
TIMING

APRIL 13

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-35 12-45 4-45 6-24 7-45

JAMAAT 5-10 1-15 5-00 6-28 8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Man accused in 2013 child rape case arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A man accused in a 2013 child rape case in Jashore's Pagladahe village was arrested yesterday morning, 12 years after the crime was committed.
Abdul Khalek, 40, had been evading arrest since May 4, 2013, when he allegedly tied up and raped a child in the Pagladahe Math Para area.
Following the arrest yesterday, he was sent to court in the afternoon through the Jashore Sadar Court.
Police said the victim and her mother were living in a rented house at the time. After the incident, several law enforcement agencies launched a manhunt, and a reward was announced for Khalek's capture. A charge sheet was filed against him in the same year.
Despite these efforts, Khalek managed to stay under the radar. A few months after the incident, his family abruptly left the area without notice, and the accused disappeared from public view. A court-issued arrest warrant also failed to secure his capture for over a decade.
However, following the recent political shift, Khalek began making brief public appearances in his native village, according to police. Acting on a tip-off, a team from the Jashore District Detective Branch (DB) raided Pagladahe early yesterday and arrested him.
After initial interrogations, Khalek was presented before the court. Law enforcement agencies have said that the whereabouts of the victim and her family are currently unknown.
Manjurul Haque, officer-in-charge of the Jashore DB, confirmed the arrest.

From Dhaka, for Gaza

FROM PAGE 3
By mid-afternoon, the entire area surrounding the Udyan was overwhelmed by a tidal wave of people.
Abu Musa, a student of Dhaka College, said, “Every day in Gaza, children are dying, and mothers are crying. If we stay silent now, we are complicit in this horror.”
Musa also expressed his frustration at the international community's response. “Israel is growing more reckless because of the United Nations' failure and the deafening silence of the Muslim world,” he said.
He urged the Bangladesh government to adopt a firmer diplomatic stance.
The rally was one of the largest pro-Palestinian demonstrations in Bangladesh in recent memory, and organisers said it was part of a broader, global wave of protests.
“From Europe to the America, peace-loving people are coming out to condemn Israel's aggression,” said one organiser. “We are part of that collective voice, standing against injustice.”
Symbolic coffins were laid out in the middle of the rally, some with the names of Palestinian children who have died in recent weeks. Others bore the words “Stop ethnic cleansing” and “End the apartheid”.
The air rang with slogans — “Free Free Palestine”, “Gaza, we are with you”, “Down with Zionism” — shouted in unison.
Zulfiqar Ahmed, a private university student from Dhanmondi, said he had come to show that Bangladeshis stand with oppressed people everywhere.
“The Palestinians have faced occupation, airstrikes, and apartheid for decades. Today, we show that their pain is ours.”
“Even if we cannot physically stand with them, we can at least raise our voices,” he said.
Among the sea of marchers were also madrasa students and teachers.
Abdus Sabur, a madrasa teacher from Kamrangirchar, said, “Every child, every woman in Gaza now lives in fear. This is not just a political issue — this is about humanity.”
Meanwhile, vendors sold Palestinian flags, headbands, and T-shirts along the rally route. Flags ranged from Tk 120 to Tk 300, depending on size, while T-shirts were priced at Tk 100, and headbands at Tk 10 to Tk 20.
“I bought the largest flag available,” said Russell Ahmed, who joined the rally with friends. “This is how I protest. Gaza may be far, but our solidarity can reach there.”
The massive gathering did not come without its logistical challenges.
Police said although it was a public holiday, the demonstration impacted traffic on almost all major roads in the capital, leading to severe congestion in many areas.
Some streets, however, remained relatively empty.
Police said this was because many people avoided taking their cars out, while others headed directly towards Suhrawardy Udyan, easing pressure on some roads.
Due to traffic congestions near the Shishu Mela in Shyamoli to the Agargaon intersection, public transport users had to face delays of up to 30 minutes.
The procession also created a tailback from Mirpur to Bijoy Sarani.
A traffic sergeant on duty at Dhanmondi-27, requesting anonymity, said, “There are no empty roads left in the capital. We've had to implement diversions on some routes to keep traffic moving.”
Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) deployed additional officers across key intersections, including Bangla Motor, Shahbagh, Katapon, and Science Laboratory. Police said they had to divert vehicles in several areas.
A steady stream of processions continued to pour into the city centre even after 4:00pm.
As the sun dipped low over Suhrawardy Udyan, thousands stood together, proclaiming, with one voice: “Palestine will be free!”

Don't equate July

FROM PAGE 3
for wider reforms. These include a bicameral legislature, increased representation of women in Parliament, and separating the posts of Prime Minister, Leader of the House, and Party Chief. The party also backed a more balanced distribution of power between the President and the Prime Minister.
JASAD called for abolishing the Rapid Action Battalion and suggested dividing the country into provinces.
At the start of the meeting, NCC Vice Chairman Prof Ali Riaz said the reform process was driven by public demand, though initiated by the interim government. He said the commission plans to finish the first round of

talks with political parties by mid-May.
In the afternoon, the commission also met with the Zaker Party. A 10-member delegation, led by Secretary General Shamim Haider, presented their views. The NCC began formal consultations on March 20. So far, it has met with seven parties.

Increase lower

FROM PAGE 3
former district and sessions judge and former SC registrar general Syed Aminul Islam; former district and sessions judge Masdar Hossain; Dhaka University Associate Professor Kazi Mahfuzul Haque Supan; and a student representative.

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দরপত্র স্থগিতকরণ নোটিশ প্রত্যাহার

ইমিগ্রেশন ও পাসপোর্ট অধিদপ্তরে আউটসোর্সিং প্রক্রিয়ায় জনবল সরবরাহের জন্য প্রতিষ্ঠান নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে স্মারক নং- ৫৮.০১.০০০০.১০২.৯৯.০১৯.২৪-৫৭০, তারিখঃ ১৯-০৮-২০২৪ খ্রিঃ মূলে প্রকাশিত টেন্ডার নোটিশের সকল কার্যক্রম মহামান্য হাইকোর্টের রিট পিটিশন নং ৮৩৫/২০২৪ এর প্রেক্ষিতে গত ১৫ সেপ্টেম্বর, ২০২৪ খ্রিঃ তারিখে প্রকাশিত বিজ্ঞপ্তির মাধ্যমে স্থগিত করা হয়। গত ১৯.০৩.২০২৫ তারিখে মহামান্য হাইকোর্ট কর্তৃক উক্ত রিট পিটিশন খারিজ হওয়ায় টেন্ডার কার্যক্রমের উপর স্থগিতাদেশ প্রত্যাহার করা হয়। তৎপ্রেক্ষিতে টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট ক্রয়, জমা, উন্মুক্তকরণ ও প্রি-বিড মিটিং এর তারিখ ও সময় নিম্নলিখিত ছক মোতাবেক পুনঃনির্ধারণ করা হল।

দরপত্র ক্রয় ও জমার সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	২৪/০৪/২০২৫, বেলা: ০১:০০ ঘটিকা
দরপত্র উন্মুক্তকরণের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	২৪/০৪/২০২৫, বেলা: ০২:০০ ঘটিকা
প্রি-বিড মিটিং এর তারিখ ও সময়	১৬/০৪/২০২৫, বেলা: ১০:০০ ঘটিকা

বিঃ দ্রঃ যে সকল প্রতিষ্ঠান পূর্বে দরপত্র ক্রয় করেছে, তারা উক্ত দরপত্রের মাধ্যমেই টেন্ডার কার্যক্রমে অংশ গ্রহণ করতে পারবে এবং গত ১৯-০৮-২০২৪ খ্রিঃ তারিখে Invitation for Service procurement এ উল্লেখিত সকল শর্তাবলী অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে।

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GD-864

Amin Bazar landfill's toxic impact

We need an environment-friendly waste management system

We are alarmed by the extent of pollution spreading from the Amin Bazar landfill to its surrounding areas. Since the landfill's establishment in Baliarpur, Savar, in 2007, pollutants have been infiltrating the soil, air, and groundwater of the area, severely affecting the villages around Amin Bazar. These villages, once known for their fertile farmlands and fresh air, are now grappling with widespread environmental degradation. Experts warn that untreated leachate from the landfill may be spreading toxic substances across a radius of up to five kilometres, polluting nearby ecosystems and water sources. The Turag River, already polluted by untreated industrial waste, has suffered further contamination from the landfill's runoff.

According to a 2022 study, leachate, a hazardous liquid produced by decomposing waste, is infiltrating the soil and groundwater within a 1.5 km radius of the landfill, carrying heavy metals such as arsenic, nickel, chromium, and lead. High levels of arsenic and nickel were detected in both surface water and groundwater near the landfill, while the presence of cadmium and nickel in surface water indicates high levels of toxicity. In groundwater, the highest concentration of heavy metals was found in areas near the landfill, indicating that these toxic metals are emanating from it. Additionally, the soil in the vicinity has also been contaminated, with chromium levels measured at 108.5 milligrammes per kilogramme—exceeding the permissible limit of 100 milligrammes per kilogramme—indicating alarming levels of pollution.

The long-term consumption of crops grown in the polluted soil poses a significant risk of cancer and other life-threatening diseases. In fact, residents of the area have already been affected, with many suffering from asthma, skin diseases, and other respiratory illnesses. This raises critical questions: what actions has the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) taken over the years to prevent the landfill from becoming such an environmental hazard? Why is the leachate treatment pond at the landfill not functioning properly? The authorities' inaction in addressing environmental degradation in the area is totally unacceptable.

We urge the government to take immediate action to address the health and environmental risks posed by the Amin Bazar landfill. While it is reassuring that a waste-to-energy plant is under construction in Amin Bazar, which is expected to help reduce pollution in the area once completed next year, urgent short-term measures are also needed. The landfill authorities must ensure that the leachate management pond functions effectively and implement mechanisms to prevent leakage. Additionally, they must stop burning waste to curb air pollution. The government must recognise that waste management is a critical issue for the country and should, therefore, prioritise the establishment of environmentally friendly and sustainable waste management systems.

We must prepare for all uncertainties

Early steps can help avert spillover effects of US-China tariff war

We are deeply concerned about the escalating tariff war between the US and China which, according to experts, would not only negatively impact the world's two largest economies but would also likely affect the entire global economy. Our main concern, however, lies with the challenges that Bangladesh's RMG-export-dependent economy could face amid the trade war between these two giants.

On April 11, China reportedly imposed a 125 percent tariff on US goods in retaliation for President Trump's increase of duties on Chinese goods to 145 percent. Earlier, on April 2, the US president imposed "reciprocal tariffs" ranging from 10 to over 50 percent on almost all countries. Later, he paused the higher tariffs on most countries except China. Between March and April 9, US tariffs on Chinese goods rose from around 20 to 145 percent, while China's tariffs on US goods increased from around 21 percent to 125 percent. Consequently, the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala warned that "merchandise trade between these two economies could decrease by as much as 80 percent"—and since US-China trade together accounts for three percent of global trade, other economies would be negatively affected.

This is particularly true for countries that depend on these two trade giants. Bangladesh, for instance, relies heavily on the US market for its RMG exports. Although initially, Bangladesh was hit with a 37 percent tariff by the Trump administration, the 90-day pause in tariffs brought some relief. However, if a recession hits the US, demand for clothing will likely decline, thereby hurting our exports. Moreover, the possible collapse of the WTO-led trade order—which has somewhat protected vulnerable economies—adds to the uncertainty facing Bangladesh. If countries are left to fend for themselves, capturing export markets will depend solely on individual countries' negotiating capacities, where more powerful and wealthier nations would have an inherent advantage.

Another concern for Bangladesh is an impending price war. Bangladesh will not be the only country seeking to diversify its markets if and when a US recession occurs. International competitors are likely to adopt similar strategies. Even local competition to capture a shrinking RMG market is likely to hurt many companies within Bangladesh. It is, therefore, crucial for the government, diplomats, policymakers, and businesses to collaboratively develop innovative strategies to navigate these uncertain times and prepare for global economic turmoil.

Diversifying products and markets, forging bilateral and regional trade ties, encouraging foreign investments and joint ventures, and enhancing the country's brand value must be explored creatively and with urgency. Proactive measures from all stakeholders are essential to make our economy more resilient to upcoming shocks.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

First human on space

On this day in 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin became the first human to travel into space.



What more can the state do for our diaspora?



M M Mahbub Hasan is head of financial inclusion and school banking at Prime Bank PLC. He can be reached at mmmahbubhasan11@gmail.com.

M M MAHBUB HASAN

Bangladeshis working in various countries around the world are playing a significant role in the nation's overall economic growth by sending their hard-earned remittances. According to data from Bangladesh Bank, remittances contribute approximately 6 to 7 percent to Bangladesh's national economy.

As of July 2023, the number of Bangladeshi diasporas was approximately 15.513 million. The countries with the largest Bangladeshi diaspora populations include Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Malaysia, the UK, the US, and Canada—home to about 36.45 percent of the total diaspora. An estimated 5 to 7 million Bangladeshis reside in the Middle East alone, with more than 2.5 million living in Saudi Arabia. In terms of the foreign labour market in Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh ranks just behind India and Pakistan.

It goes without saying that members of the diaspora face various challenges, including limited employment opportunities, complications related to passports and visas, and a lack of social recognition. The state must pay greater attention to the struggles and hardships experienced by the diaspora community.

A report by the digital migration platform Ami Probashi mentioned that manpower export in 2024 decreased by 27.4 percent compared to 2023, which has become a cause of great concern for Bangladesh. The Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) mentioned in their report that around 1.12 million Bangladeshi workers went abroad in 2024. Among them, the number of skilled workers was 214,044, which is 23.62 percent of the total labour market. At the same time, 491,480 people, or 54.23 percent, went abroad as low-skilled workers.

Despite the obstacles, Bangladeshis living abroad sent \$27 billion in 2024.

As a result, Bangladesh ranked seventh globally among remittance-earning countries—its highest position in history. India was the top remittance recipient in the world, receiving an estimated \$129.1 billion in 2024. In the same year, Bangladesh ranked fifth among remittance-earning countries in Asia—Pakistan ranked fourth with \$33 billion, the Philippines third with \$40 billion, and China second with \$48 billion.

In 2025, it is likely that all previous



FILE VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

records for remittance inflows to Bangladesh will be surpassed. A new record was set in March during Eid-ul-Fitr, when remittances totalled \$3.29 billion. In February, total diaspora income rose to \$2.53 billion, also marking the highest ever for a single month. Statistics show that the total amount of remittances sent by the diaspora over the last 10 years amounted to \$177.59 billion.

Although remittance flows faced some challenges during the 2023-24 fiscal year, there has been promising

progress in recent times. However, many of the demands made by the diaspora remain unaddressed. Among them, several urgent issues require immediate attention from the state.

To increase remittance flows, the dominance of hundi systems must be eradicated. Sending money through hundi instead of official banking channels undermines legitimate remittance flows. To combat this, awareness must be raised, and banking services should be made more accessible, efficient, user-friendly, and appealing.

The government must take more effective steps to export skilled manpower. Due to a lack of adequate skills, many members of the diaspora are employed in low-paying jobs. Although there are Technical Training Centres (TTCs) across the country, the desired progress has yet to be achieved.

the diaspora could be introduced. The current 2.5 percent incentive for sending remittances via banking channels could be increased, with a portion allocated towards life and health insurance for diaspora families. Banks offering insurance products for the diaspora may provide valuable guidance in this regard.

The security of diaspora families and their assets must be strengthened. Many members of the diaspora are concerned about the safety of their families and properties. In some cases, hard-earned assets are unlawfully seized. Appropriate and strict legal action must be taken to prevent this.

Partial tuition fee waivers and other benefits could be offered for the education of diaspora children. Educational institutions might also offer special provisions for children of those who send remittances through banking channels.

Passport issuance and renewal should be made more convenient for the diaspora. Primary personal data and photographs could be authenticated digitally during the renewal process, or when issuing national identity cards, birth certificates, and other documents.

Airports must be upgraded to provide a more comfortable experience for the diaspora upon arrival and departure. Many complain of mistreatment at airports, including loss of valuables and unnecessary harassment. The government has responded to some concerns by inaugurating a VIP lounge at the airport, a move that has been widely appreciated. However, it remains vital to treat diaspora members as VIPs, recognising them as a key driving force in the nation's economy.

Remittance inflows should not be restricted to a few Middle Eastern countries. There is significant potential for exporting manpower to regions such as Europe, Japan, South Korea, and Australia. Accessing these labour markets could further boost remittance inflows.

Lastly, loans and other banking facilities on favourable terms should be provided to encourage investment by the diaspora. To achieve this, more effective and thoughtful measures must be undertaken, keeping the well-being of the diaspora at the forefront.

China's bold move to bypass Western tech dominance



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SAYEED AHMED

Washington's continued restrictions on exporting chip technology to Beijing may soon prove futile because the silicon-based semiconductor industry faces a potent adversary taking shape in China. After decades of silicon dominance, carbon nanotubes are emerging as a promising alternative to transform computing power while dramatically reducing energy consumption. This technological shift may also fundamentally alter the global tech competition, with China charting its innovative path rather than following in Western footsteps.

Traditional silicon chips have improved steadily for decades, following Moore's Law by doubling transistor density roughly every two years. But we're approaching physical barriers that silicon cannot overcome. Modern chips leak electricity and generate excessive heat as transistors shrink to atomic scales, creating serious efficiency problems.

This limitation is particularly problematic for artificial intelligence applications. *The New York Times* reported that training a single advanced AI model can consume as much electricity as 100 American households use annually.

Carbon nanotubes (CNT)—microscopic cylinders of carbon atoms—offer a compelling alternative

with remarkable advantages. First, they conduct electricity far better than silicon. Second, they manage heat more efficiently. Third, they can operate with up to 90 percent less energy. Fourth, they function at smaller scales than silicon can achieve.

According to a recent analysis by *The Wall Street Journal*, CNT represents not just an improvement in chip technology but potentially a fundamentally different approach to computing architecture.

The emergence of CNT coincides with escalating US-China technology tensions. As *Foreign Policy* magazine detailed, since 2018, Washington has implemented increasingly stricter controls on selling advanced semiconductors and related technologies to China. But rather than simply attempting to catch up in these areas, China appears to be charting an entirely different course—one focused on leapfrogging current technology. Researchers at Peking University demonstrated carbon nanotube transistors that rival advanced silicon chips while using significantly less power. Besides, the Chinese Academy of Sciences has achieved breakthroughs in solving critical manufacturing challenges.

This approach mirrors China's mobile technology strategy of the early 2000s. It leapfrogged to mobile

networks rather than building extensive landline infrastructure as Western countries once did. This technological leap allowed China to bypass decades of development and emerge as a mobile technology leader.

Japan followed a similar path in the 1970s and 1980s. Instead of copying American manufacturing methods, its automakers pioneered lean production techniques that revolutionised the industry. *The Harvard Business Review* documented how this independent approach transformed Japan from a technological follower to a leader in just one generation. History shows that the most successful technological challengers didn't follow the established path—they found a new one. China's focus on CNT without replicating silicon manufacturing follows this historical pattern.

However, despite promising developments, bringing CNT chips to market presents formidable challenges. First, manufacturing consistency at the industrial scale remains difficult. Second, integration with existing computing architectures requires significant adaptation. Third, building an entirely new supply chain takes time and massive investment. Continued American investment in research and innovation also poses challenges. *MIT Technology Review* reports that IBM and Intel are pursuing CNT research, while venture capital firms fund several startups focusing on this area.

All these suggest that Washington's restrictions may have inadvertently accelerated Beijing's investment in alternative technologies that could eventually surpass the very technologies being withheld. Any technological divergence

could reshape global computing architectures and standards. Devices and systems might develop along increasingly separate paths with different optimisation priorities and capabilities. This potential bifurcation raises important strategic questions about technology adoption, compatibility, and long-term planning for businesses and governments worldwide.

China's CNT gambit represents more than just a response to export controls—it reflects a maturing approach to innovation. Rather than following the established technological roadmap, China is increasingly willing to chart its course. One such example is the launch of DeepSeek, which shook American stock markets to the core.

As we've seen throughout industrial history, technological leapfrogging often succeeds precisely because legacy approaches don't constrain it. From Japan's manufacturing revolution to South Korea's semiconductor rise, countries that find alternative paths frequently move faster than established leaders expect. The most effective technological strategies rarely involve simply catching up—they must find a different way forward, including developing newer technologies and charting different trajectories. China's focus on post-silicon computing suggests it has internalised this lesson.

Whether CNT fulfils its promise or other alternatives emerge, one thing is clear: the future of computing will be shaped not by who can build the best chips under prevailing paradigms but who can pioneer entirely new ones. More DeepSeek moments could be just around the corner.

Bangladesh deserves better leaders. How do we find them?



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KALLOL KIBRIA

Something shifted in the air after the recent Bangladesh Investment Summit. The conversations were ambitious, the energy palpable. But what stood out most wasn't a policy announcement or a foreign pledge—it was a silent, growing consensus about the kind of leadership this country truly needs to move forward.

For the first time in a long time, it felt like the room was full of possibility not just because of capital or contracts, but because of people. We witnessed a different calibre of leadership—individuals who were confident without being arrogant, educated without being elitist, and globally fluent without losing their connection to the land they came from. And perhaps for the first time in decades, Bangladeshis collectively began to see what our politics could look like if the right people were given the platform to lead.

That's when something quietly but powerfully emerged—a new paradigm of leadership. Let's call it "the Ashik Chowdhury paradigm."

Now, this isn't about one man or one speech. It's a symbol. A representation of a deeper national yearning. It reflects a growing impatience among the people—especially the youth—with the old ways of doing politics. Bangladeshis are no longer interested in leaders chosen solely because of dynastic ties, blind party loyalty, or how loudly they can cheer during parliamentary sessions. They are asking harder questions like: who really speaks for us? Who is equipped to take our voices to Geneva, to New York, to regional trade summits and global climate tables?

We are no longer a country defined only by its past. We are one of the fastest-growing economies in South Asia. We are building expressways, launching satellites, exporting digital services. Yet, our politics still feels trapped in the 1980s—a theatre of loyalty contests and generational entitlements. Something doesn't add up.

The truth is, we need new blood. And not just young blood, but fresh blood. Educated, ethical, globally aware, and deeply rooted in the everyday realities of ordinary Bangladeshis. We need leaders who understand policy, who speak truth with compassion, and who can transition seamlessly from a village gathering in Gaibandha to a high-level forum in Brussels. That standard is not impossible. We have seen glimpses of it. And once you see it, you can't unsee it.

There is no lack of qualified people in this country. We have young lawyers, doctors, academics, economists, climate scientists, and tech innovators—many of whom are already contributing to national development in significant ways. The private sector has embraced these talents. So has civil society. Even international organisations have begun hiring Bangladeshi professionals at senior levels. Yet, our political institutions remain largely closed off to them.

our challenges are more complex: climate resilience, digital governance, geopolitical alignment, inclusive urbanisation, youth employment, gender justice. These require leaders who not only understand policy, but also understand the world.

To navigate these new realities, we need leaders who are neither afraid of intellect nor threatened by questions. We need leaders who don't see fluency in English as elitism, but as a necessary tool for diplomacy and international negotiation. Parliament must be a house of ideas, not applause; of serious scrutiny, not performative loyalty.

There's a strange discomfort in our political culture with the word "education," as if being educated somehow makes one disconnected or "foreign." But what is politics if not the most complex, demanding job of all? If we expect qualifications from our engineers, teachers, and doctors, why not from our lawmakers?

An MP is not just a local powerbroker. They are legislators. They pass laws that affect 170

keep winging it.

Education is not about English fluency or fancy degrees. It's about critical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to understand complexity. It's about integrity, perspective, and the discipline to listen and learn. We must stop framing educated leadership as a threat to grassroots connection. The two are not mutually exclusive—they are necessary complements.

One of the more insidious problems in Bangladeshi politics is the entrenchment of dynastic control. Political legacies are passed down like family heirlooms, not earned through merit or public service. This not only blocks fresh talent—it fosters a dangerous sense of entitlement among political heirs.

Of course, political experience within families isn't inherently bad. Many sons and daughters of political leaders grow up understanding governance deeply. But when bloodline becomes the only qualification, it signals decay. It tells young people that unless

the role. They should rise through public trust, competence, and clarity of vision. The future of this country depends on that shift.

One of the most tragic ironies of our political structure is that we have a functioning parliamentary democracy on paper, but not in practice. Parliament should be a sacred space of disagreement, dialogue, and lawmaking. Instead, it often resembles a battleground of party dominance, with real policy discussions drowned out by slogans and shouts. Opposition is painted as treason. Dissent is punished. And backbenchers are expected to clap, not challenge.

This is not democracy. This is theatre. The people of Bangladesh deserve more. We deserve MPs who speak not just to cameras, but to constituents. Who spend time reading bills, visiting schools and clinics, listening to farmers and factory workers. MPs should be researchers, facilitators, and visionaries—not just carriers of party lines.

The speaker's office, too, must evolve. It should be an impartial guardian of parliamentary integrity, ensuring that every voice is heard, and every perspective debated. Real-time fact-checking, public scorecards, and constituency accountability reports should become standard tools in the political ecosystem.

The final transformation must be cultural. Politicians are not our masters. They are our employees. They don't rule us. They serve us. This mindset shift is already happening at the grassroots. People are more informed, more connected, and more assertive. They are no longer content with being spoken at—they want to be spoken with. They want transparency, access, and accountability. And they are willing to demand it.

Gone are the days when politicians could rule from a distance. Today's citizens want leaders who walk with them, speak like them, understand their struggles, and make decisions with heart and reason. They want leaders who show up—not just during election season, but all year round.

This is the moment. A new political awareness is blossoming in Bangladesh, and it's unstoppable. Anyone who ignores it—any party that tries to suppress it—will be left behind. To move ahead, we must reform our political institutions and reimagine the very architecture of leadership in the country. Political education must be integrated into our academic and civic life. Schools and universities should teach young people not just how to vote, but how to lead.

Party constitutions must change to enforce internal democracy. Campaign finance must be regulated to prevent the influence of black money. Media freedom must be protected so journalists can hold power accountable. And digital tools must be used to enhance—not manipulate—democratic participation. Most of all, we must stop celebrating survival and start demanding excellence. Our future depends on it.



A new political awareness is blossoming in Bangladesh, and it's unstoppable.

FILE PHOTO: AFP

Why? Because the current political structure is designed not to empower leadership, but to preserve control. It prioritises obedience over originality, visibility over vision, and loyalty over learning. It is a system built to maintain power, not to distribute it wisely.

This is where the old guard must be challenged—not disrespected, but challenged. The generation that led us through independence and beyond deserves our respect. They built a nation from scratch. But that struggle belongs to a different time. Today,

million lives. They represent us in international treaties, multilateral organisations, and global debates. How can we expect them to function without the tools required for that job?

In the 1970s, many of our national leaders came from humble backgrounds with little formal education. And yet, they led with vision and moral clarity. That was a different era. Today, we don't have the luxury of improvisation. Our politics must become professional, structured, and intellectually rigorous. Not because we want to imitate the West, but because the stakes are too high to

they are born into power, they can never access it. That message is corrosive to democracy.

If political parties are serious about representing the people, they must start building platforms for merit-based entry. They must engage universities, professional associations, and civil society in leadership scouting and development. Internships, shadowing opportunities, debates, and policy boot camps should be part of every party's outreach programme.

The next prime minister should not be chosen in a backroom negotiation or born into

How women are revolutionising our agriculture



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SUSMITA DAS

In Bangladesh's economy, agriculture plays a vital role in providing livelihoods for around 45.33 percent of the total labour force and contributing 11.38 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Women are an indispensable part of the agricultural workforce. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), women's agricultural work spans not only production but also post-harvest activities, such as processing, packaging, and marketing. These activities are essential in ensuring food security and promoting economic sustainability in rural communities. They are also associated with safe food production. However, despite their significant contributions, women's roles in agriculture are often underappreciated and undervalued, with numerous challenges, such as limited access to land, financial services, training, and modern technology, primarily due to entrenched social norms and gender biases.

According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2022 of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the participation of women aged 15 and above in agriculture is 26.2 percent, while the rate for their male counterparts is 19.2 percent.

The country's highest employment-creating sector is gradually becoming dominated by females, with their engagement in agriculture and every agricultural subsector, including poultry and livestock, fisheries, and horticulture. The transformation that has been occurring for over a decade has already had a positive impact on the overall participation of women in the labour force in farming, while men are switching to urban services. The migration of men to urban areas in search of higher-paying jobs, as traditional farming becomes less lucrative, particularly in crop production, has

left women to manage agricultural activities to support their families' income.

The "feminisation of agriculture" is a growing phenomenon, as increasing numbers of women assume leadership roles in the sector. This shift can be attributed to several factors, such as livestock rearing, poultry farming, post-harvest operations, and seed preservation. Approximately 63 percent of women in rural areas are involved in preserving local seeds, which ensures biodiversity and sustainability in farming practices.

Women are predominantly responsible for managing cattle, poultry, and goats, which play a critical role in household nutrition and income. They are also essential in managing post-harvest activities, such as winnowing, sorting, primary processing, and storing crops. By managing diverse agricultural activities, women contribute to the availability of nutritious food, improving the health and well-being of their families.

Land ownership is a key determinant of agricultural production, yet women in Bangladesh face substantial challenges when it comes to owning or inheriting land.

According to the World Bank, only around 13 percent of women have sole or joint ownership of agricultural land, compared to 70 percent of men. For economic empowerment, Bangladeshi women need equal property rights. Cultural norms often prioritise male inheritance, and property laws frequently favour men, leaving women with little legal control over the land they work. This lack of control means women are unable to make independent decisions about farming practices, investments, or business opportunities. Furthermore, they are less likely to receive financial support from banks, which require land as collateral for loans.

Women in Bangladesh are also lagging in financial credit. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) reports that women in rural Bangladesh are 20 percent less likely to access formal credit than men, primarily due to their lack of land ownership and social exclusion from financial institutions. This financial exclusion restricts women's ability to invest in technology or agricultural inputs, thus limiting their productivity and income potential.

Access to modern agricultural inputs and technology is also crucial for enhancing productivity. However, many women in rural Bangladesh are unable to access new technologies due to gender biases, lack of training, and limited mobility. According to a report from the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB), less than 30 percent of rural women have received agricultural training, compared to over 70 percent of men. Without access to modern farming techniques, women remain stuck in subsistence farming, unable to increase yields or improve efficiency.

To unlock the full potential of women in agriculture and address these challenges, several strategies must be implemented, such as legal reforms to ensure that women have equal access to land and property rights. The government should promote joint land ownership models, where both men and women in a household have legal control over the land. Creating gender-sensitive land registration processes and ensuring that women's names appear on land titles would allow women to secure loans and make independent decisions about farming. The World Bank has suggested that empowering women through secure land tenure could significantly increase agricultural productivity, as women tend to reinvest their earnings into their families and communities.

To enable women farmers to invest in modern agricultural practices, access to credit must be improved. Financial institutions should develop gender-sensitive loan products tailored to the needs of women farmers, with lower collateral requirements and flexible repayment terms. The microcredit programme, which Bangladesh has pioneered, provides some microfinance loans to rural women. Additionally, the

Bangladesh Bank should encourage gender-responsive banking practices and create schemes that prioritise women's access to financial resources.

Access to modern agricultural inputs and technology is essential for increasing productivity. Technological innovation plays a significant role in alleviating the labour-intensive nature of agriculture. Several women-friendly technologies have been introduced in Bangladesh to ease the burden of agricultural work. Fodder chopper machines simplify the chopping of grass for cattle feed, saving women valuable time and effort. This is a prime example of women-friendly technology that is making a significant impact on the lives of female farmers in rural Bangladesh. Hermetic Storage Bags provide an efficient and safe method for storing seeds, reducing the risks of pest infestations and moisture-related losses. They have proven to be especially beneficial for women who are responsible for seed preservation. BAU-STR Dryers, developed by Bangladesh Agricultural University, reduce grain loss during the drying process to 0.5 percent, compared to the 3-4 percent loss using traditional methods. The dryers are user-friendly and help maintain the quality of grain.

Paddy, wheat, and maize threshing are mechanised, which is considered women-friendly and affordable. Women's groups may organise themselves as service providers. Small-scale food processing, such as milk-based cheese, sweetmeats, and pickles, may be organised through self-help groups, and relevant micro-enterprise organisations may support them with skill development and business opportunities.

The government and NGOs should subsidise agricultural inputs, such as fertilisers, high-yielding seed varieties, and irrigation equipment for women farmers, including solar panel-based irrigation. Agricultural extension services should be restructured to be more inclusive of women, offering training programmes that cater to their specific needs. Female extension officers can help connect women farmers to resources and provide tailored advice on farming techniques, climate-smart practices, and pest management.

On a positive note, women are increasingly

participating in agricultural education, with about 40 percent of women enrolled in universities and training institutes. Thirty percent of women are engaged in agricultural extension, and 12 percent in agricultural research. This may be exploited in women-friendly agricultural programmes to intensify agricultural production and farm profitability. The Department of Agricultural Extension has made it mandatory to include women in forming farmers' clubs and farm schools. The farming system research approach has mainstreamed nutrition and safe food production, and women are participating in the programmes and receiving training on safe and nutritious production.

Education and training are crucial for enhancing women's agricultural productivity. Agricultural training programmes should be designed to address the specific needs of women, offering flexible schedules and locations. In addition to farming skills, women should be trained in business management, marketing, and financial literacy to help them manage their agricultural enterprises effectively.

For sustainable growth in agriculture, women must be included in decision-making processes at all levels. Encouraging women to take leadership roles in agricultural cooperatives and community organisations will ensure their voices are heard in policy and programme development. At the national level, policymakers should work to integrate women's perspectives into agricultural planning, ensuring that policies are designed to address the specific needs of female farmers.

The feminisation of agriculture in Bangladesh and South Asia is transforming the agri-food system. Women's participation has been recognised in all relevant policies. Accordingly, several programmes are being implemented—however, such programmes should be well coordinated. A favourable public policy environment and women-friendly farm operations need to be synchronised with an adequate R&D system. The organised farming and post-production system should be supported in entrepreneurship development. Capacity building of the farming community will be a prime task to make them a more productive segment of society.

Nations agree ‘in principle’ to tackle future pandemics

REUTERS, Geneva

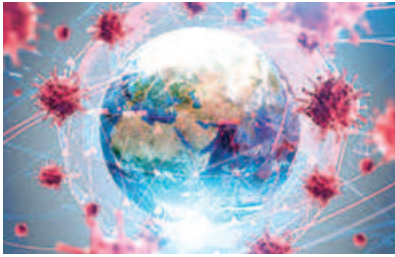
Members of the World Health Organization are close to a deal on a treaty to prepare for future pandemics, sources involved in the talks told Reuters on Saturday, with a WHO spokesperson saying discussions had been paused until Tuesday.

The pact, which has been arduously negotiated for three years and which would be legally binding, is intended to shore up the world's defences against new pathogens after the Covid-19 pandemic killed millions of people in 2020-22.

“They (the talks) went overnight until 9:00am but didn’t manage to resolve the final issues,” one source involved in the discussions in Geneva said.

A diplomatic source in Geneva added that “big advancement was made ... almost all the treaty was agreed upon with few outstanding yet crucial issues”.

The talks missed a key deadline last year despite several rounds of late-night talks.



The negotiating body's co-chair had earlier told the AFP that it had reached an agreement “in principle”.

The United States, which was slow to join the early talks, left the discussions this year after new President Donald Trump issued an executive order in February withdrawing from the WHO.

The other 192 members of the WHO who joined the discussions would be free to ratify the deal or not after it is formally adopted.

One of the most contentious issues between wealthy countries and developing states is how to share drugs and vaccines fairly to avoid the mistakes of the Covid era.

The negotiations have been vexed throughout by allegations from right-wing commentators, including in the US but also Britain and Australia, that they could undermine national sovereignty by giving too much power to a UN agency.



Mexican authorities and residents try to control a forest fire in Santo Domingo Tomaltepec, Oaxaca, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

US in hurry for nuclear deal

Says Iran after high-stakes, ‘constructive’ talks in Oman

AFP, Muscat

The United States wants a nuclear agreement “as soon as possible”, Iran said after rare talks yesterday, as US President Donald Trump threatens military action if they fail to reach a deal.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who briefly spoke face-to-face with Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff during the indirect meeting in Oman, said the talks would resume next Saturday.

“The American side also said that a positive agreement was one that can be reached as soon as possible but that will not be easy and will require a willingness on both sides,” Araghchi told Iranian state television.

“At today's meeting, I think we came very close to a basis for negotiation... Neither we nor the other party want fruitless negotiations, discussions for discussions’ sake, time wasting or talks that drag on for ever,” he added.

Oman's foreign minister acted as intermediary in the talks in Muscat, Iran said. The Americans had called for the

meetings to be face-to-face.

However, the negotiators also spoke directly for “a few minutes”, Iran's foreign ministry said. It said the talks were held “in a constructive and mutually respectful



atmosphere”.

The long-term adversaries, who have not had diplomatic relations for more than 40 years, are seeking a new nuclear deal after Trump pulled out of an earlier agreement during his first term in 2018.

Araghchi, a seasoned diplomat and key architect of the 2015 accord, and Witkoff, a real estate magnate, led the delegations

in the highest-level Iran-US nuclear talks since the previous accord's collapse.

The two parties were in “separate halls” and were “conveying their views and positions to each other through the Omani foreign minister”, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Bagaei posted on X.

Iran, weakened by Israel's pummelling of its allies Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza, is seeking relief from wide-ranging sanctions hobbling its economy.

Tehran has agreed to the meetings despite baulking at Trump's “maximum pressure” campaign of ramping up sanctions and repeated military threats.

Meanwhile, the US, hand-in-glove with Iran's arch-enemy Israel, wants to stop Tehran from ever getting close to developing a nuclear bomb.

Yesterday's meetings followed repeated threats of military action by both the US and Israel.

“If it requires military, we're going to have military,” Trump said on Wednesday when asked what would happen if the talks fail.

Military needs extensive reforms

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in horrifying crimes like enforced disappearances.

The event was a seminar on keeping the armed forces free from politicisation organised by the Retired Armed Forces Officers' Welfare Association (RAOWA) at the RAOWA Club in the capital's Mohakhali DOHS.

RAOWA Chairperson Col (retd) Mohammad Abdul Hoque asked why the Directorate General Forces Intelligence (DGFI) had a political wing.

The DGFI should never be involved in politics, he said.

Brig Gen (retd) Dr Abdullah Al Yusuf proposed that supervisory power over the military be decentralised so that it cannot be made to pander to any party's political interests anymore.

“It is dangerous for one person to have complete control over the state's military and civil intelligence agencies. This opens up avenues for abuse. Under the current system, the intelligence agencies are directly answerable to the

head of the government.

“We have seen how in the past, the defence adviser and the head of the government have abused the intelligence agencies. Instead of doing their mandated duty, they were used as political pawns to repress opposing political thoughts. Instead of protecting national security, they were protecting the political security of a party.”

Yusuf believes it's not enough to have just one defence adviser. “Instead, we also need a national security council and a separate secretariat. All of the intelligence agencies will be under that council. The council will have representatives from all ministries, such that the national security adviser cannot override them and advise the head of state.”

He stressed the need for a national security reform commission comprised of experts who would recommend the reforms necessary in the national security policy and the security forces.

Maj Gen (retd) Nayeem Ashlaque Chowdhury said, “The current system is not meritocratic. The weaker the intelligence agencies are, the more vulnerable we are.”

He said that politicisation has damaged discipline in the army and affected postings and even the military judiciary system.

Rear Admiral (retd) Mustafizur Rahman said the military's own judicial system is questionable and politicised and proposed that the system be reformed.

Dr ASM Ali Ashraf, chairman of Dhaka University's international relations department, said, “The head of state has previously used the military to doctor elections. We have never monitored our national security forces. We need a separate parliamentary standing committee focused on the intelligence agencies.”

Addressing the seminar as chief guest, Col (retd) Oli Ahmed cautioned against getting RAOWA involved in politics and told all military

personnel to remember their duty to the nation.

Speaking as a special guest, Mahmudur Rahman, editor of Daily Amar Desh, recommended that all military officers be removed from the Rapid Action Battalion.

“Military officers should be kept away from civil duties as much as possible. No serving army officer should have commercial ventures because it presents a conflict of interest.”

Echoing other speakers, he also demanded that all military personnel who have been accused of human rights violations be investigated and brought to justice.

“Actions like maintaining ‘Aynaghar’ or allowing for Indian intervention in our national affairs should be considered as anti-state activities.”

He also called for transparency in defence budgeting and said that a special parliamentary standing committee should be created to review the budget for defence.

Trump backs away from tech tariffs

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that make iPhones and other premium products in China, and will generally narrow the impact of the staggering 145 percent tariffs Trump has imposed this year on Chinese goods entering the United States.

Washington and Beijing's escalating tariff battle has raised fears of an enduring trade war between the world's two largest economies and sent global markets into a tailspin.

The fallout has sent particular shockwaves through the US economy, with investors dumping government bonds and the dollar tumbling.

Nevertheless, Trump insisted Friday on his Truth Social platform that “we are doing really well on our tariff policy,” even after Beijing announced its latest hike.

Daniel Ives, senior equity analyst at Wedbush Securities, called the US exemptions “the best news possible for tech investors.”

“US tariff exclusions will apply to computers, smartphones, and chip-making equipment which takes (away) a huge black cloud overhang for now over the tech sector,” he added in a note.

Without these exemptions, he said, “the US Tech industry would be taken back a decade and the AI Revolution thesis would have been slowed significantly.”

Many of the exempted products, including hard drives and computer processors, generally are not made in America.

While Trump has referred to tariffs as a way to bring manufacturing back to the United States, analysts say it

will likely take years to ramp up domestic production.

Trump has specifically targeted China with his “reciprocal” tariffs meant to address practices Washington deems unfair.

And even with Washington and Beijing going toe-to-toe, the White House insists Trump remains “optimistic” about a deal with China.

His Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping gave his first major comments on the tensions Friday, with state media quoting him as saying his country was “not afraid.”

Economists warn that the disruption in trade between the tightly integrated US and Chinese economies will increase prices for consumers and could spark a global recession.

China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao told

the head of the World Trade Organization (WTO) that US tariffs will “inflict serious harm” on poor nations, according to a ministry statement released yesterday.

“The United States has continuously introduced tariff measures, bringing enormous uncertainty and instability to the world, causing chaos both internationally and domestically within the US,” Wang told WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala in a call, the statement said.

Beijing also indicated Friday that it would ignore any further levies by Trump because it said it no longer makes economic sense for importers to buy from America.

China also said it would file a lawsuit with the WTO over the latest round of levies.

BTRC dismantles

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undermined the original International Long-Distance Telecommunications Services (ILDTS) policy and inflated intermediary costs without adding value.

Instead of promoting healthy competition, the policy favoured select operators, resulting in higher costs for terminating operators and a loss of potential revenue for the state, Hossain added.

Originally, international calls were terminated by mobile operators. However, in 2008, the government introduced an additional layer in an effort to curb the VoIP business.

As per the ILDTS policy, a specific network topology was established, setting a three-year framework for international voice call services such as IGWs.

Initially, IGWs brought calls through international telecom operators before routing them to mobile or landline users through another set of operators known as ICXs.

In 2014, the cartel proposed an experimental system called the IGW Operator Switch, which placed control of the common network switch for interconnection and call termination in their hands.

That year, the BTRC approved the experimental network topology without amending the ILDTS policy, in clear violation of regulations.

The government subsequently approved it a year later, paving the way for members of the cartel to benefit from higher revenue and dominate the market.

Although the directive was issued on an experimental basis in 2015, it continued for years.

The revocation comes as part of the reforms the BTRC has undertaken since Md Emdad Ul Bari was appointed the chairman in September last year.

The IOF unilaterally amended the commission-approved agreement without authorisation, violating

BTRC directives.

There was also a lack of transparency in the expenditure of funds collected under the name of Market Development Expenses (MDS).

As part of its agreement, the IOF has collected a total of Tk 631 crore as Market Development Expenses (MDS) from all IGW operators.

More than 95 percent of this amount has been received and spent non-transparently under a single account: Beximco Computers.

Due to the lack of transparency in handling such a large sum through a single entity, the BTRC decided to refer the matter to the Anti-Corruption Commission for further review and investigation.

The Daily Star made multiple attempts to reach Beximco Computers, a sister concern of Salman F Rahman's Beximco Group. However, the contact number listed on the website remained unreachable.

Considering these issues, the commission has revoked the approval of the operational agreement between the IOF and IGW operators for call exchanges under the government-approved network topology.

The existing IOF-related guidelines issued by the commission will be repealed, and a revised directive will be issued, requiring all IGW operators to operate as IGW (IOS), establish inter-operator connections and implement overall management of call exchanges, including technical, financial and monitoring aspects.

The following measures will be implemented for new international call operations: designation of a common point, collection of liquid bank guarantees, implementation of dipping operations using a single MNP server, equitable distribution of international calls, and implementation of international call exchange and monitoring systems.

Repeal Special Powers Act

FROM PAGE 10

from her profile soon afterwards.

However, the footage was downloaded by social media users who posted it again.

An officer from Bhatara Police Station, requesting anonymity, said officers took her to the Detective Branch (DB) office on Minto Road after detaining her. A Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka sent her to jail on Thursday night.

Amid criticism on social media, Dhaka Metropolitan Police issued a statement on Friday, refuting allegations that she had been abducted.

The statement said Meghna was held in accordance with the law, but made no mention of the time of her detention.

The statement added that she was accused of trying to deteriorate the relations between countries by spreading lies about an important person, hampering national security and being involved in a conspiracy to damage the economy.

Police also arrested an associate of Meghna on charges of blackmailing a foreign diplomat.

The Gonotantrik Odhikar Committee said that the stated reasons for Meghna's arrest were “vague and misleading”.

“If a citizen is targeted using state forces because of a foreign diplomat's personal agenda, it undermines the sovereignty of the country,” the group said.

The rights body described this as an “alarming abuse of power”, adding that using state forces in this way reflected an “ongoing pattern of authoritarian control” over the justice system, even after an uprising.

The platform said that the Special Powers Act is a fascist law which several advisers of the current government have spoken about at various times. However, this law is being used to cover up the “wrongdoing” of a foreign diplomat and to “legitimise his action by attacking a woman at her home”.

It also urged the government to investigate the role of the foreign diplomat involved and take appropriate diplomatic steps if allegations of misconduct are proven.

Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua, speaking to The Daily Star, said, “They violated the procedure of arrest. The High Court has given clear directives on the steps that should be followed when arresting without a warrant.”

According to the HC directives, arrests without a warrant must be based on credible information, officers must disclose their identity and record reasons for the arrest, and the arrested person must be allowed to consult a lawyer or meet their relatives.

“Meghna was arrested on a prejudicial suspicion under Section 3 of the special powers law. Yet her actions do not fall under the definition of a ‘prejudicial act’ as stated by that very law,” said Barua.

A “prejudicial act” as defined by the law refers to any action intended or likely to harm Bangladesh's sovereignty, security, public order, or international relations. It also includes acts that incite hatred, disrupt law and order, essential services, or the economy, or cause public fear or alarm.

“This was a personal matter, and they have violated her fundamental rights under article 43 of the constitution which states that every person has the right to be secured in their home against entry, search and seizure,” said Barua.

M a n a b a d h i k a r Shongskriti Foundation demanded the repeal of the law and the release of the model. “The law enforcement

kept her in detention for two days, and then produced her at court at night. We strongly criticise the arrest and incarceration of this woman when there are no specific cases or charges against her,” it said in a statement.

Another civic platform, Janovassyo, also demanded the repeal of repressive laws like the Special Powers Act of 1974. In a statement yesterday, the platform said that Meghna's detention has severely undermined public trust in state institutions.

The harassment she faced, along with the attempt to malign her character with false claims about her personal life, is unacceptable, the statement said.

They called it a resurgence of fascist tactics and demanded a high-level, impartial, and swift investigation into the incident and strict punishment for all those found guilty. “Meghna must be released immediately and her safety ensured.”

‘ASSOCIATE’ HELD

Detectives have arrested Dewan Samir, 58, owner of the manpower agency Sanjana and CEO of Japanese cosmetics e-shop Kawaii, on charges of blackmailing a Saudi diplomat using women.

Samir was produced before a Dhaka court yesterday, where police sought a 10-day remand for further interrogation. The court granted a five-day remand.

Earlier, DB chief Rezaul Karim Mallik told this correspondent that Samir is an associate of Meghna.

According to the forwarding letter submitted to the court, Ariful Islam, a sub-inspector of Bhatara Police Station, said that a fraud syndicate, allegedly led by Samir, has been using attractive women to lure diplomats and affluent individuals into romantic relationships for extortion.

“Since January 2024, the group had been targeting the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Bangladesh, Essa Bin Youssef Alduhailan. They trapped him in a personal relationship and subsequently demanded five million dollars,” the forwarding letter said.

Acting on a tip-off, a team from the Detective Branch raided a flat in Bashundhara Residential Area around 10:25pm on Thursday and arrested Samir.

Police claimed that on April 8, around 1:30pm, Samir and his cohorts attempted to extort money at his residence.

“This was part of a larger conspiracy against the state aimed at tarnishing Bangladesh's image abroad,” it said. Police said that it has also been learned that the accused and his associates may possess critical anti-state information.

Talking to The Daily Star on Friday night, Meghna's father Badrul Alam said his daughter has been involved with Miss Bangladesh Foundation since 2020, focusing on empowering women and representing them on global platforms.

He claimed that during her work, she developed a close relationship with the Saudi diplomat, which allegedly led to their engagement a few months ago.

But she recently learned that the man already had a wife, Badrul claimed, adding that Meghna contacted the diplomat's wife and ended the engagement.

Angered, the diplomat reportedly raised concerns with the home ministry, claiming the situation could harm diplomatic relations, Badrul said.

Badrul also said they believed the matter was on the way to being resolved, as they had held meetings with high-ranking law enforcement officials.

Bangladeshi man

FROM PAGE 2

days, I heard he occasionally travelled to India. On April 8, he and several others crossed the border. While returning, the BSF chased them. The others escaped, but Wasim was caught. We've come to know that he was beaten to death.”

His father, Ramzan Ali, added, “I've learned from various sources that the body found in the river was of my son. I demand that the authorities recover his body immediately.”

Lt Col Rafiqul

Alam, commander of Khalishpur 58 BGB, said, “The body was floating on the Indian side of the Ichamati river, and the BSF took it. We are in communication with them to recover the body.”

“The body was on the Indian side of the river, and the BSF retrieved it around 10:00pm Friday. The BGB is actively working to resolve the issue,” the OC said.

A flag meeting will be held with the BSF over the matter, said the BGB commander yesterday.

Diabate hunts down Kings again

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan's inspirational skipper Souleymane Diabate scored a brace as the Black and Whites took another step towards claiming a first-ever Bangladesh Premier League title with a 2-1 win against 10-man Bashundhara Kings at the Kings Arena on Saturday.

The Malian striker exploited two unforgivable mistakes from the opposition players to give the league leaders their second win in the league over the five-time champions, in the process all but ending the hosts' hopes of a successful title-defence.

Diabate had also scored in the reverse fixture of the league where Mohammedan had run out 1-0 winners in Cumilla while he had also scored the only goal for Mohammedan in their 3-1 defeat against the same opposition in the season-opening Challenge Cup fixture.

The 34-year-old gave Mohammedan the lead in the 18th minute with a placing finish from outside the box after a terrible mix-up between defender Deciel dos Santos and goalkeeper Mehedi Hasan Srabon had handed him the opportunity to strike his eighth goal of the campaign.

Kings, who were playing with only two foreigners in the starting XI against Mohammedan's four, hit back seven minutes later, with Rakib Hossain grabbing



Mohammedan players celebrate their crucial win against Bashundhara Kings with the Palestinian flag, showing their solidarity with the war-ravaged people of Gaza.

PHOTO: BFF

a poachers' goal, poking home a rebound after Mehedi Hasan Mithu managed to block a shot from Mohammad Sohel Rana from outside the box.

The hosts were reduced to 10 men three minutes after restart when right-back Rimon Hossain saw a second yellow card after needlessly pulling down Emmanuel Sunday near the byline, long way away from the box.

Kings brought on three changes soon, including introducing Argentine striker Juan Lescano for the first time alongside Evans Etti, and the latter was partially culpable for the second Mohammedan goal.

The Ghanaian forward lost the ball in midfield in the 85th minute before Sunday's long ball found Diabate close to the box. The Malian rounding off Srabon and Deciel and picked the back of the net with precision to send the visitors on way to another tremendous victory, which took them to 30 points from 11 matches – 10 ahead of Kings.

Abahani, meanwhile, remained in pursuit of Mohammedan with a commanding 4-1 win against Wanderers at the Shaheed Barkat Stadium in Gazipur.

Raphael Augusto opened the scoring after the break and then wrapped up the victory with a brace, with Sumon Reza and Mohammad Ridoy netting the other two goals for the Sky Blues, who now have 26 points from 11 matches.

Sakib Bepari scored the consolation goal from the spot for Wanderers.

Elsewhere, Fortis FC moved into the fifth position with a 2-0 win over Brothers Union at the Bir Shreshtho Flight Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj.

Nineteen-year-old defender Aky Marma scored his first goal in the league while Pa Omar Babou confirmed of all three points for Fortis. Brothers Union, meanwhile, slipped to seventh position with 15 points.



Pacer Ebadot Hossain continues his good form, finishing with career-best List-A figures of 4 for 36, after opener Anisul Islam's [Below] career-best 114-run knock helped Mohammedan secure a 39-run victory over archrivals Abahani in their Dhaka Premier League (DPL) match at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Extra pressure, added effort key to win: Hridoy

SPORTS REPORTER

Towhid Hridoy believes the intensity and emotional weight of "a few matches in the Dhaka Premier League (DPL)" push players to give more than they often do in international cricket, after Mohammedan triumphed by 39 runs over their arch-rivals Abahani in a high-stakes DPL fixture on Saturday.

Mohammedan, led by Hridoy, clinched the contest at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium to finish the league phase second in the standings, behind league leaders Abahani.

There was added joy for Mohammedan as it was their first List-A victory over Abahani since 2016, after a streak of 11 winless matches.

"Pressure is always there, both in international cricket as well as in domestic cricket. There are a few matches in the Dhaka Premier League in which I feel more pressure than I usually do in international cricket," Hridoy told reporters in Mirpur yesterday.

"Since there is tradition here, it becomes a game of egos, and prestige is at stake. You can feel the Abahani-Mohammedan rivalry in the DPL. I think there are many players who have put in more effort here today than they have put in international matches. I've enjoyed it."

After asked to bat, Mohammedan



gained from a one-man show as opener Aminul Islam Emon scored a 118-ball 114, hitting 18 fours and two sixes. The right-hander stitched a 123-run stand with Mahidul Islam Ankon (48 off 55 balls).

However, there was little to get excited about from the rest of the Mohammedan batters, with the next highest score being Mushfiqur Rahim's 26-ball 20. After Ankon's dismissal, they were 156 for two in the 26th over, eyeing a 300-plus total, but were eventually bundled out for 264 in 48.2 overs.

Abahani's Nahid Rana was the pick of the bowlers with figures of three for 49, while Mrittunjoy Chowdhury, Rakibul Hasan, and Mahfuzur Rabby picked up two apiece.

"It was a big match. It's always a cause for excitement whenever

Abahani and Mohammedan face off. It gets very competitive too. We focused on ourselves and what we wanted to do," said Hridoy, who played for defending champions Abahani last year.

"Credit has to be given to Emon [Aminul Islam] for the way he started off; he batted very well. We were always in a dominating position because of the way he batted. It wasn't easy and, apart from one or two batters overall, no one could play with ease on this wicket, which was a bit tricky – normally what we get in Mirpur. We were always confident that 250 on this wicket was enough."

In response, Abahani got off to a shaky start as they lost three wickets inside the first 11 overs with 59 runs on the board. A 67-run stand between skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mominul Haque (19 off 18 balls) followed, but Abahani were pegged back when they lost half their side in the 28th over, with 133 runs needed off 132 balls.

Shanto played through the innings with a 113-ball 80 and had help from Mosaddek Hossain (24 off 21 balls) and Mrittunjoy Chowdhury (24 off 33 balls), but the pressure got the better of the Abahani batters as they eventually folded out for 225 in 47.2 overs.

Ebadot Hossain starred with four wickets for 36 runs for Mohammedan, while Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Mohammad Saifuddin picked up two each.

Real aim recovery at Alaves

AGENCIES

Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti, reeling from a 3-0 mauling at Arsenal in the Champions League quarter-final first leg, must rally his players for Sunday's LaLiga fixture away at 17th-placed Alaves.

After last weekend's home defeat by Valencia, Ancelotti's side are four points behind leaders Barcelona after 30 games.

Broadcast blackout in Zimbabwe series?

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is struggling to sell the media rights for the upcoming home two-Test series against Zimbabwe as so far, no broadcaster nor marketing agents have shown interest.

On March 19, the BCB officially invited Expression of Interest (EOI) along with financial offers for the series, which will begin on April 20. The deadline for EOI submission ended on April 7, but the BCB received zero offers.

"As far as I know, no one has shown any interest as they believe the two-match series won't be feasible," a BCB source told The Daily Star yesterday on the condition of anonymity.

In the recent past, the Tigers' home series have aired on T Sports and GTV through Millennium Media Consortium, whose contract with the BCB ended with the home series against South Africa in October last year.

Total Sports Marketing (TSM) CEO Md Moinul Haque Chowdhury, whose company owns the ICC cricket rights in Bangladesh until 2025, said due to a crisis in the advertisement market they didn't even consider applying for the media rights of the Zimbabwe series.

"The condition of the market is so poor that no client is interested to advertise... I informed him [Faruque] about the current situation. As I don't own a TV channel, I would need to find a TV channel after acquiring the rights. So, it's not feasible for me either," Moinul told The Daily Star yesterday.

It is learnt that if the BCB fails to sell the media rights, it may air the series on state-owned BTV and BTV World.

When contacted, BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury didn't deny the predicament the board is in with the Zimbabwe series but said, "The matter is still not settled. We are hopeful."

The BCB's struggles are not limited to just the Zimbabwe series. On March 11, BCB had invited EOIs from consulting firms to help the board with the tendering process for the worldwide media rights of the men's team's home series till June 2027, but garnered no interest.

"The BCB is trying to appoint an international consultancy firm to get a valuation of their media rights, conduct the EOI and tender process... But no one showed any interest," said the BCB source. "The BPL broadcasting rights and TV product contracts are also over. Now we have home production service agreement and ground rights, both until 2027. But now we don't have global media rights for home series," he concluded.

WOMEN'S WC QUALIFIER In-form Bangladesh face winless Ireland

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's team will look to continue form as they take on Ireland in their second match of the ongoing ICC Women's World Cup Qualifier in Lahore today (3:00 pm, Bangladesh time).

The Tigresses made a dominant start to the tournament, riding on captain Nigar Sultana Joty's hundred to thrash Thailand by 178 runs and register their biggest win in this format, giving them a huge advantage in net run rate.

Meanwhile, Ireland have lost both their games to Pakistan and West Indies so far in the tournament, despite having showcased fighting spirit in both contests.

A win for Bangladesh at the Gaddafi Stadium will place them level on points with leaders Pakistan in the six-team competition – which will determine the two teams advancing to September-October's main event in India – given the West Indies, who started their campaign with a defeat to Scotland, are likely to climb the points table.

Joty and company yesterday had an extensive practice session in hot and humid conditions in Lahore, and according to team officials, all players are in good health.

Bangladesh have so far faced Ireland in nine WODIs, winning six matches and losing one, while two ended without result.



Kevin De Bruyne inspired a brilliant Manchester City comeback, scoring once and providing two assists in a commanding 5-2 victory over Crystal Palace on Saturday. The win ended Palace's eight-game unbeaten run across all competitions and lifted City to fourth in the Premier League, two points clear of Chelsea and Newcastle United, who both have games in hand.

PHOTO: REUTERS

CORPORATE BOOKING

Fantasy Kingdom and Water Kingdom will be reserved on 13th April (Sunday), 2025 for Corporate Booking.

From 14th April (Monday), 2025 Fantasy Kingdom and Water Kingdom will remain open for all.

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Repeal Special Powers Act

Rights groups demand after model's detention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Legal experts and various rights groups called for the repeal of the Special Powers Act following the detention of model and Miss Bangladesh Foundation Chairperson Meghna Alam.

The Gonotantrik Odhikar Committee yesterday strongly condemned the detention of Meghna under the Act, calling it a fascist and authoritarian move.

The group demanded her immediate release and urged the government to scrap the 50-year-old law.

In a statement issued yesterday, the organisation's member Prof Anu Muhammad said no repressive law, including the Special Powers Act, should exist in the post-uprising Bangladesh.

No repressive law, including the Special Powers Act, should exist in the post-uprising Bangladesh.

PROF ANU MUHAMMAD

Meghna's detention saga unfolded when she went live on her Facebook page on Wednesday, saying that individuals identifying themselves as law enforcers from Bhatara Police Station were trying to break into her flat without a warrant.

A visibly distressed Meghna is heard in the video requesting the men "carrying firearms" to leave and telling them that she would go to the police station.

The 12-minute footage shows the individuals breaking into her flat and forcibly taking her phone. The video and some of her previous posts were removed

SEE PAGE 8 COL 7



With hopes for a bright future, men, women, and children offer flowers at Ramna Lake in the capital yesterday on the occasion of Phul Biju, marking the first day of the three-day Baisabi festival, the largest religious and social celebration of the indigenous communities.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Adani plant supplying at half capacity

Load-shedding expected from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India's Adani plant is supplying power through one of its units due to technical glitches, a development that can increase load-shedding, said officials from the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) and the Power Grid Bangladesh.

On April 8, the first of the power plant's two 800-megawatt (MW) units shut operation and the second

one stopped operation on early Saturday at around 12:45am, said ABM Badiuzzaman, deputy manager (public relations) at the PGC&B.

However, from 6:15 pm yesterday, electricity from unit 1 began to be added to the main grid, he said.

PGCB data shows that after the disconnection of the Adani plant, the power generation shortage stood at

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Military needs extensive reforms

Demand retired army officers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Retired army officers have called for extensive reforms in the military to ensure that the armed forces and intelligence agencies cannot be abused for political gains in the future.

Speaking at an event yesterday, they also demanded that the authorities concerned take steps to punish the army officials who were involved

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

BTRC dismantles IGW cartel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The telecom regulator has revoked a cartel that controlled the international incoming call market in Bangladesh since 2015.

The seven-member cartel, known as the IGW Operators Forum (IOF), oversaw much of international gateway (IGW) operations and was allowed to take significantly higher revenue than other general IGW operators.

The IOF was initially formed in 2015 to maintain order among operators in the international call exchange market, reduce unhealthy competition over call termination rates, ensure revenue for both the government and operators and prevent illegal international call exchanges.

The seven members of the cartel, a few of whom are affiliated with the past Awami League regime, are Unique Infloway, Digicon Telecommunication, Mirtel, Bangla Trac Communications, NovoTel, Roots Communication and Global Voice Telecom.

However, the cartel failed to achieve its core objectives, according to documents from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

The implementation of the IOF has led to significant inefficiencies in the telecom sector, said Abu Nazam M Tanveer Hossain, a telecom policy expert.

By creating a cartel of seven dominant IGW operators, the IOF structure marginalised competition,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

Trump backs away from tech tariffs

AFP, Washington

The Trump administration has announced a series of major exemptions to its punishing global tariffs -- an apparent step back in an escalating trade war with China.

A notice late Friday by the US Customs and Border Protection office said smartphones, computers and other electronics would be excluded from the import levies President Donald Trump rolled out a week ago.

The move came as retaliatory Chinese import tariffs of 125 percent on US goods took effect yesterday, with Beijing standing defiant against its primary trade competitor.

The exemptions will benefit US tech giants like Apple

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



With iron rods protruding from the ground, drivers must exercise extreme caution while passing this dangerous stretch of Atish Dipankar Road near the capital's Kamalapur Railway Station. For the past two months, underground sewerage works remained unfinished, turning this road hazardous. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Israel expands Gaza offensive

Takes over major corridor, completing encirclement of Rafah

AFP, Gaza City

Israel yesterday announced that its military had completed the takeover of a new corridor in southern Gaza, advancing its efforts to seize large parts of the war-battered Palestinian territory.

The military also announced a sweeping evacuation order for tens of thousands of residents of Khan Yunis and surrounding areas in southern Gaza ahead of a planned strike after projectiles were fired from there earlier in the day.

The seizure of the "Morag axis" came while Hamas expected "real progress" towards a ceasefire deal to end the war in Gaza, an official from the group told AFP, with senior leaders from the Palestinian movement scheduled to hold talks with Egyptian mediators in Cairo later yesterday.

"The IDF (military) has now completed its takeover of the Morag axis, which crosses Gaza between Rafah and Khan Yunis, turning the entire area between the Philadelphia Route (along the

- Israel army issues evacuation order for Khan Yunis residents
- Minister says Israel to expand offensive 'throughout most of Gaza'
- Hamas delegation reaches Cairo for truce talks

border with Egypt) and Morag into part of the Israeli security zone," Defence Minister Israel Katz said in a statement addressed to residents of Gaza.

"Soon, IDF operations will intensify and expand to other areas throughout most of Gaza, and you will need to evacuate the combat zones.

"In northern Gaza as well -- in Beit Hanoun and other neighbourhoods -- residents are evacuating, the area is being taken over and the security zone is

being expanded, including in the Netzarim corridor," he added.

Since a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas collapsed in mid-March, Israel's renewed offensive in Gaza has displaced hundreds of thousands of people while the military has seized large areas of the war-battered territory.

Top Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have repeatedly said that the ongoing assault aims to pressure Hamas into freeing the remaining 58 hostages held in Gaza.

Hamas said the offensive not only "kills defenceless civilians but also makes the fate of the occupation's prisoners (hostages) uncertain".

In a separate announcement, the military ordered residents of Khan Yunis and surrounding areas to evacuate after the air force intercepted three projectiles fired from south Gaza earlier in the day.

"IDF troops are operating with significant force in the area, and will strike with intensity on any location from which rockets are launched," the military said on X.

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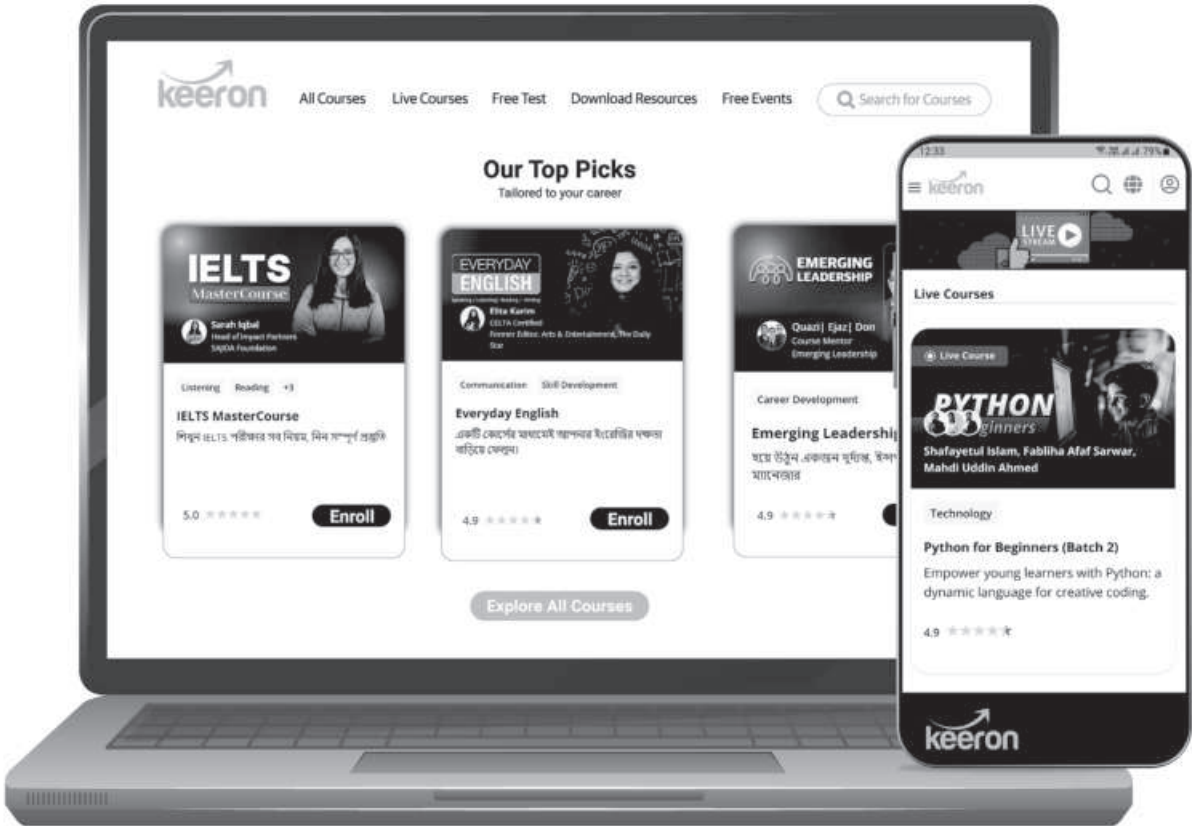
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