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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.

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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

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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

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## 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

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## 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,

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## 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

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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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