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## Chaos over cuffs at ICT

SHARIFUL ISLAM and  
SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

A ruckus broke out at the International Crimes Tribunal yesterday as some of the 19 high-profile accused, including former ministers and senior bureaucrats, were brought into the courtroom in handcuffs.

The use of handcuffs inside the courtroom caused outrage among the defence and prompted a swift inquiry by the tribunal into the police's conduct.

"This is cruel and disgraceful. The accused are elderly and pose no threat. They deserve to be treated with dignity," defence lawyer Mustafizur Rahman Khan told the court.

Minutes earlier, police had escorted the accused into the courtroom in a case filed over crimes against humanity during the July uprising.

The accused included former ministers Amir Hossain Amu, Anisul Huq, Qamrul Islam, Lt Col (retd) Faruk Khan, Shajahan Khan, Abdur Razzaque, Dipu Moni, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haq Inu, Kamal Ahmed Majumder, Golam Dastagir Gazi, and former state minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak, as well as

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Former ministers and bureaucrats accused in a case filed over crimes against humanity committed during last year's July uprising are being taken to a courtroom at the International Crimes Tribunal for a hearing yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Recruit more women peacekeepers

Yunus urges chief of UN peace operations



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday urged the United Nations to recruit more Bangladeshi women in peacekeeping missions, reaffirming the country's steadfast commitment to international peace and security.

He made the call during a meeting with Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN under-secretary-general for peace operations, at the state guest house Jamuna in Dhaka, the CA's Press Wing said in a statement.

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## Air freight capacity to increase

CAAB, Biman planning a series of upgrades

RASHIDUL HASAN

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) and Biman Bangladesh Airlines are enhancing their air cargo infrastructure following India's sudden suspension of third country transshipment.

CAAB, the civil aviation regulatory body of the civil airlines, and Biman, the sole ground-handling agent at airports in Bangladesh, are taking urgent steps to expand capacity, deploy manpower and reduce costs to ensure uninterrupted exports by air, particularly of garment items.

The move comes as Bangladesh's garment exporters face a major challenge in handling urgent international shipments after India abruptly closed a widely-used air cargo transshipment route on April 8.

The route, via Kolkata and Delhi airports, allowed Bangladeshi exporters to move goods overland to India through the Benapole-Petrapole border and then air-ship them worldwide.

It became popular since the pandemic, offering faster service and often lower costs than relying on the overstretched Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) in Dhaka.

Industry estimates suggest about 18 percent of Bangladesh's garment air cargo was flown through Indian airports per week in a lean season.

Bangladesh exported roughly 3,400 tonnes of garments by air in a week, with 600 tonnes flown through Indian airports before the transshipment ban, according to data from the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association.

One of the main attractions of Indian air transshipment

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## 'Freeze 70 accounts of Nasrul Hamid'

Court also orders ACC to confiscate his 4 flats, 3 vehicles

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission to freeze 70 bank accounts of Nasrul Hamid, former state minister for power and energy, in a case filed over acquiring Tk 36.37 crore illegally.

The court also ordered confiscation of three cars and four flats owned by Nasrul. The flats are located at the capital's Ramna and Banani areas.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after ACC Assistant Director Minhaz Bin Islam, who is leading the inquiry team, submitted an application in this regard.

In the application, the ACC official said they learned from credible sources that the accused has been attempting to transfer his properties. Therefore, an order is needed to prevent him from doing so, the official said.

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## Israeli strikes across Gaza kill 25

Netanyahu says military to increase pressure on Hamas

AFP, Gaza City

Gaza's civil defence agency reported that Israeli air strikes since dawn yesterday have killed at least 25 people across the Gaza Strip, including women and children.

Israel resumed its aerial and ground assault on Gaza on March 18, reigniting fighting after a two-month ceasefire that had paused more than 15 months of war in the coastal territory.

"Since dawn today, the occupation's air strikes have killed 20 people and injured dozens more, including children and women across the Gaza Strip," Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for the civil defence agency told AFP.

In a separate statement later, the agency reported that five people were killed in an Israeli drone strike on a group of civilians in eastern Rafah.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday vowed to continue the war and bring home the remaining hostages held in Gaza without yielding to Hamas's demands.

"We are at a critical stage of the

campaign, and at this point, we need patience and determination to win," Netanyahu said in a statement, rejecting calls from the Hamas to end the war and withdraw troops from Gaza.

Since Israel resumed its offensive last month, at least 1,827 people have been killed in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

The overall death toll in the Gaza war has reached 51,201, the majority of them civilians, according to the ministry, figures the UN considers reliable.

Pope Francis yesterday reiterated his call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza in an Easter Sunday message read aloud by an aide as the pontiff, still recovering from pneumonia, looked on during a brief appearance on the main balcony of St Peter's Basilica.

In the Easter message, the pontiff said the situation in Gaza was "dramatic and deplorable". The pope also called on Hamas to release its remaining hostages and condemned what he said was a "worrisome" trend of antisemitism in the world.

» Pope calls for Gaza ceasefire during Easter appearance

» 1,827 killed in Gaza since Israel resumed its offensive

## Nasa's oldest astronaut returns to Earth on 70th birthday



AFP, Washington

Cake, gifts and a low-key family celebration may be how many senior citizens picture their 70th birthday.

But Nasa's oldest serving astronaut Don Pettit became a septuagenarian while hurtling towards the Earth in a spacecraft to wrap up a seven-month mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS).

A Soyuz capsule carrying the American and two Russian cosmonauts landed in Kazakhstan yesterday, the day of Pettit's milestone birthday.

"Today at 0420 Moscow time (0120 GMT), the Soyuz MS-26 landing craft with Alexei Ovchinin, Ivan Vagner and Donald (Don) Pettit aboard landed near the Kazakh town of Zhezkazgan," Russia's space agency Roscosmos said.

Spending 220 days in space, Pettit and his crewmates Ovchinin and Vagner orbited the Earth 3,520 times and completed a journey of 93.3 million miles over the course of their mission.

It was the fourth spaceflight for Pettit, who has logged more than 18 months in orbit throughout his 29-year career.

The trio touched down in a remote area southeast of Kazakhstan after undocking from the space station just over three hours earlier.

Nasa images of the landing showed the small capsule parachuting down to Earth with the sunrise as a backdrop.

## Polls must be held by Dec

BNP, Gono Odhikar Parishad, CPB say in meetings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The next national election must be held by December following necessary state reforms based on consensus, said leaders of the BNP and Gono Odhikar Parishad after a meeting yesterday.

They said if the interim government fails to announce a specific election timeline, it could lead to confusion and uncertainty, which would not bode well for the country.

A delegation of eight leaders from Gono Odhikar Parishad sat with three senior BNP leaders at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office, where both sides emphasised the urgency of concluding the reform process and moving towards the polls.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said all reform proposals have been submitted, and there is no reason to take more than a week to determine where consensus has been reached based on those proposals.

"After determining where consensus has been achieved, it is crucial to sign the national charter and declare the election date accordingly."

He further said, "Based on the consensus, we can decide, sign the national charter, and hold polls even before December. There is no question of going beyond December; rather it is possible to hold the election earlier."

Nurul Haque Nur, president of Gono Odhikar Parishad, said, "We believe that for the sake of democracy and

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The daughter of a victim of extrajudicial killing breaks down into tears at a protest held yesterday demanding justice for abductions and killings allegedly committed by law enforcers during the ousted Awami League regime. The platform Mayer Dak organised the demonstration in front of the High Court Mazar Gate. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## MURDER, RAPE OF CHILD One lands in jail, 4 in correction centre

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Pabna court yesterday sent a man to jail and four others to a juvenile correction centre on charge of killing a minor girl after rape in Natore last week.

The accused, Md Sohel Rana, 25, and four others, aged between 14 and 17, are of Baraigram upazila of Natore.

Police said eight-year-old victim was returning home alone from her grandmother's home on April 14 evening. The suspects stopped and forcibly took her to a nearby banana orchard. They strangled her after raping her and dumped the body in a nearby village in Pabna's Chatmohar upazila, said Md Monjurul Alam, officer-in-charge of Chatmohar Police Station, citing the suspects' confessional statements.

Her face bore burn injuries as chemicals were poured onto the face, said the OC.

On information, police recovered the body on April 15. The victim's mother filed a case with the Chatmohar Police Station against

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