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## Hold local polls before national election

### Jamaat urges EC

UNB, Mymensingh

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday urged the authorities to hold local government polls before the national election in order to demonstrate the Election Commission's sincerity and capability.

"The Election Commission claims it will deliver the best election in the country's history. We want an acid test. Hold local elections first and let us see your sincerity and capability," he said at a party event in Mymensingh.

People are suffering due to the absence of elected local government representatives, he said. "Hold the local polls first... If people are satisfied, they will support you fully in the future. But if irregularities are found, people will show you a red card."

He then criticised  
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Relatives mourn near the bodies of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes (not pictured), at Nasser Hospital, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Heatwave to persist till tomorrow

### Rain expected Monday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A persistent heatwave continued its sweep across the nation for the fifth consecutive day yesterday, with the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) forecasting the intense conditions lasting till tomorrow.

Relief is expected to begin from Monday as increased rainfall is predicted across the country.

The discomfort has been worsened by a lack of rainfall. Out of 51 BMD stations, only Sylhet recorded precipitation, receiving just 27mm of rainfall in 24 hours till 6:00am yesterday. This absence of rainfall is causing people to experience a "felt" temperature significantly higher than the actual mercury readings.

Dr Abul Kalam Mallik, a senior meteorologist at the BMD, told The Daily Star that relief is on the horizon. "Temperature will start to fall from Monday as rainfall may increase in different places, and it will continue till the first week of May."

Rain or thunder showers accompanied by lightning flashes and temporary gusty winds are likely to occur at one or two places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram, and Sylhet divisions in the coming days.

While Dhaka's temperature saw a slight drop to 34.6°C yesterday from the day before's 35.6°C, Dr Mallik noted that high humidity levels made the felt temperature for

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## Ilias Kanchan forms new political party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pledging to build a land of justice, a new political party - "Janata Party Bangladesh" (People's Party Bangladesh) - was launched yesterday under the leadership of noted actor and road safety activist Ilias Kanchan.

Journalist Shaukat Mahmood, a former BNP vice-chairman, has been named the party's secretary general and former state minister for education Golam Sarwar Milon as its spokesperson. The party brings together politicians, journalists, lawyers, retired army officers, and former bureaucrats.



With the slogan "Gorbo Mora Insafer Desh", the party's formation was announced at an event in the InterContinental Dhaka. There, Ilias Kanchan announced the names of the 27-member ad hoc committee, while Shaukat revealed the party's name and read out its manifesto.

Reading from a statement, Shaukat said, "Bangladesh's history bears witness to the emergence of new political parties following every mass uprising, revolution, and movement, inspired by the spirit of those struggles. As the state is going

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## WFP runs out of food stocks in Gaza

### Israeli airstrikes kill 78 more as ceasefire talks stall

REUTERS, Geneva/Cairo

The World Food Programme yesterday said it had run out of food stocks in Gaza due to the sustained closure of crossings into the enclave, while Gaza authorities said Israeli airstrikes had killed at least 78 people in the past 24 hours.

"The WFP has depleted all its food stocks for families in Gaza," a WFP statement said, adding the UN agency yesterday delivered its last remaining food stocks to hot meals kitchens in Gaza.

"These kitchens are expected to fully run out of food in the coming days," it added.

The agency said no humanitarian or commercial supplies had entered Gaza for more than seven weeks as all main border crossing points remained closed, resulting in the longest closure the Gaza Strip had ever faced.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump yesterday said that he pushed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to allow food and medicine into the devastated Gaza Strip.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One, Trump was asked whether concerns about humanitarian aid access came up in his phone call with Netanyahu earlier this week.

Israel has previously denied that Gaza is facing a hunger crisis. The military accuses the Hamas militants who have run Gaza of exploiting aid - which Hamas denies - and says it must keep all supplies out to prevent the fighters from getting it.

Since March 2, Israel completely cut off all supplies to the 2.3 million residents of the Gaza Strip, and food stockpiled during a ceasefire at

the start of the year has all but run out.

WFP warned that if the aid blockage was not lifted it might be forced to end its critical assistance.

The Hamas-run Gaza government media office yesterday said that famine is no longer a looming threat and is becoming a reality.

Yesterday, the Gaza health ministry said Israeli airstrikes killed at least 78 people in different areas of the enclave in the past 24 hours.

Residents said Israeli forces operating in

WFP says crossings into Gaza have been shut for seven weeks

Israel denies hunger crisis, blames Hamas for aid misuse

Trump says he has pushed Netanyahu on Gaza aid

Shejaia and Rafah in northern and southern Gaza blew up clusters of homes overnight.

Citing attacks initiated from those areas, the Israeli military ordered residents of Beit Hanoun and the Beit Lahya towns to leave their homes in a post published on X by an army spokesperson late on Thursday.

The new orders caused a new wave of displacement as many families began leaving their homes in the early hours on Friday, according to witnesses.

## Kuet VC, pro-VC removed from posts

### Gazette issued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry has officially relieved Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (Kuet) Vice-Chancellor Prof Muhammad Masud and Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof Sheikh Shariful Alam of their duties amid ongoing student protests.

The decision was confirmed through two separate notifications signed by ASM Kashem, senior assistant secretary of the ministry's Secondary and Higher Education Division.

According to the notifications issued yesterday, the two officials will now return to their respective academic departments.

On Wednesday, the information ministry said the government had initiated steps to relieve the two officials to resolve the ensuing crisis and resume academic activities promptly.

The release said a search committee would soon be formed to appoint new officials.

In the interim, a senior professor would be temporarily assigned to discharge the duties of the vice-chancellor.

## Trump poised to offer Saudi Arabia over \$100b arms package: sources

REUTERS, Washington/Riyadh

The United States is poised to offer Saudi Arabia an arms package worth well over \$100 billion, six sources with direct knowledge of the issue told Reuters, saying the proposal was being lined up for announcement during US President Donald Trump's visit to the kingdom in May.

The offered package comes after the administration of former President Joe Biden unsuccessfully tried to finalise a defence pact with Riyadh as part of a broad deal that envisioned Saudi Arabia normalising ties with Israel.

The Biden proposal offered access to more advanced US weaponry in return for halting Chinese arms purchases and restricting Beijing's investment in the country. Reuters could not establish if the Trump administration's proposal includes similar requirements.

The White House and Saudi government communications office did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

A US defence official said, "Our defence relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is stronger than ever under President Trump's leadership. Maintaining our security cooperation remains an important component of this partnership and we will continue to work with Saudi Arabia to address their defense needs."

In his first term, Trump celebrated weapons sales to Saudi Arabia as good for US jobs.

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## Bites on gladiator bones first evidence of combat with lion

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A Roman gladiator's skeleton has provided the first piece of physical evidence of combat between a human and a large cat, archaeologists said.

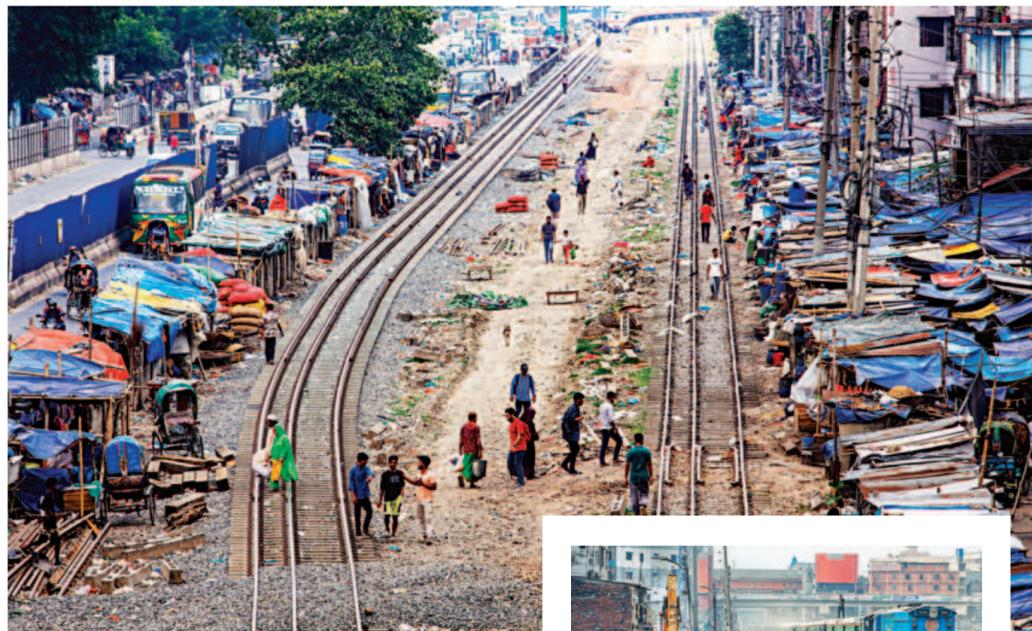
The skeleton, likely of a man who died between the ages of 26 and 35, shows bite marks on the pelvis from a big cat, which could have been a lion, archaeologists said in a new study published in the journal PLOS ONE.

The remains were discovered in the Driffield Terrace cemetery outside the city of York, UK. It was one of over 80 skeletons excavated there in 2004.

The burials at the site ranged from the early second century AD to the late fourth century AD, meaning the man was buried between 1,825 and 1,725 years ago.

A forensic examination of the skeleton found "unusual" deep holes and bite marks on the pelvis in what the study described as a "hugely exciting find".

"We believe this to be the first example that a bite mark has been identified on such remains," Prof Tim Thompson, the new study's lead author from Maynooth University in Ireland, said.



Despite a recent eviction drive against encroachers, makeshift kitchen markets have once again sprung up along both sides of the railway tracks in the capital's Malibagh area. Inset, file photo of an eviction drive in January, during which some 200 illegal structures were removed by the Bangladesh Railway authorities.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Car bomb kills senior Russian military officer near Moscow

### Kremlin blames Ukraine

REUTERS, Moscow

The Kremlin blamed Ukraine for a car bomb that killed a senior Russian military officer near Moscow yesterday, hours before US President Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff was due to meet President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

There was no official comment from Kyiv on the death of 59-year-old Yaroslav Moskalik, the latest in a series of Russian military officers and pro-war figures to be assassinated since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Witkoff met Putin to discuss US proposals for ending the war, now well into its fourth year.

"The Kyiv regime once again simply shows its true nature. The Kyiv regime continues to be involved in terrorist activity on the territory of our country," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a state TV reporter.

"It shows once again that, despite the peace talks, we must be on guard

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