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Protect rights  
of journos in  
Bangladesh

Urge Media  
Freedom Coalition

DIPLOMATIC  
CORRESPONDENT

Journalists and media professionals must be able to work safely and without fear of censorship, intimidation, or violence, said Media Freedom Coalition in Bangladesh yesterday.

It reaffirmed unwavering commitment to the principles of media freedom, freedom of expression, and access to information.

The high commissions and embassies of Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the UK in Bangladesh jointly issued the statement marking World Press Freedom Day yesterday.

It said a free, independent, and diverse media is essential for the protection of human rights, the strengthening of democratic societies, and the promotion of accountability.

"We stand in solidarity with journalists in Bangladesh and around the world who contribute to informed, resilient, and inclusive societies."

"We continue to advocate for an environment where all voices can be heard and the fundamental right to freedom of expression is respected," the statement said.

Army chief  
leaves for  
Qatar on  
official visit

BSS, Dhaka



Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman left Dhaka for Qatar yesterday on an official visit.

During the visit, the army chief will pay courtesy calls on senior military and civilian officials of Qatar and exchange views on bilateral cooperation in military affairs, said an ISPR release.

The army chief is expected to return to Bangladesh on May 5 upon completion of the visit.

Canada's Indo-Pacific trade rep in town

DIPLOMATIC  
CORRESPONDENT

Canada's Indo-Pacific Trade Representative Paul Thoppil arrived in Dhaka yesterday evening on a four-day visit that will underscore Canada's commitment to Bangladesh as it pursues democratic reforms towards a free and fair election.

He is scheduled to meet with key members of the government, other stakeholders, and leaders from the private sector, according to a statement of the Canadian High Commission in Dhaka.

Thoppil will also highlight Canada's engagement in the region, notably through its Indo-Pacific Strategy, and identify ways to expand trade and investment between Canada and Bangladesh.



Traffic jams on Mirpur Road in the Kalyanpur area have become a daily occurrence, with nearly half of the road cordoned off for underground electric line work. The road has been in this disarray for almost two weeks, exacerbating public suffering.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## 'Abrar tortured to death on suspected Shibir link'

Says HC in full verdict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court, in the full text of its verdict, yesterday observed that Abrar Fahad, a student of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), was killed based on allegations that he might be involved with Islami Chhatra Shibir.

The court also said such a claim cannot justify the inhumane torture inflicted upon him.

The observation came in the 131-page full text of the verdict delivered by the HC bench of Justice AKM Asaduzzaman and Justice Syed Enayet Hossain.

The release of the full text paves the way for the convicts to challenge the verdict by appealing to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

The court further observed that those who were present during the incident but did not actively participate in beating Abrar still shared responsibility for the murder due to their failure to intervene.

On March 16 this year, the HC upheld a trial court verdict



On March 16 this year, the HC upheld a trial court verdict sentencing 20 Buet students to death and five others to life imprisonment over the 2019 killing of Abrar Fahad.

sentencing 20 Buet students to death and five others to life imprisonment over the 2019 killing of Abrar Fahad.

Abrar, a second-year student, was beaten to death on October 6, 2019 inside Room 2011 of Sher-e-Bangla Hall by leaders and activists of the Buet unit of Chhatra League, now a banned organisation on campus.

They seized Abrar's phone, examined his social media

accounts, and found a Facebook post critical of a government agreement with India. They then assaulted him with cricket stumps and skipping ropes. Despite repeated pleas for water, Abrar was denied any, and the beating continued until he fell unconscious. When it became clear he had died, his body was moved to the stairwell.

The incident triggered nationwide protests and outrage, prompting Buet to impose a ban on all forms of student politics.

The following day, Abrar's father filed a murder case with Chawkbazar Police Station. A Dhaka court sentenced the accused on December 8, 2021. The HC verdict came after accepting the trial court's death reference and rejecting the appeals filed by the convicts.

Advocate Azizur Rahman Dulu, who represented convicts Morshed Amartya Islam and Meftahul Islam Zion, said they would now move appeals before the SC.

Once an appeal is filed,

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## Political consensus key to reforms

Says Ali Riaz

UNB, Dhaka



Political parties and alliances will show flexibility and compromise in the interest of national reform and the establishment of a truly democratic system in Bangladesh, hoped Professor Ali Riaz, vice-chairman of the National Consensus Commission, yesterday.

"All political parties and alliances are expected to make some compromises for the sake of the nation, state reforms, and democratic governance. We have all come together in this effort," he said during a dialogue with the Jatiyatabadi Somonoma Jote at Jatiya Sangsad.

The discussion was attended by commission members Iftekharuzzaman, Badiul Alam Majumdar, Safar Raj Hossain, and Chief Adviser's Special Assistant Monir Haider.

"We must come together -- not to agree on everything -- but to build consensus on key issues necessary for reforming the state and re-establishing democracy," Ali Riaz added.

A 13-member delegation from the Jatiyatabadi Somonoma Jote, led by its coordinator Advocate Dr Sohruzzaman Farhad, took part in the discussion.

The commission began a series of dialogues on March 20 with various political parties, aiming to develop a unified approach to state reforms.

## The unsung protectors

47 firefighters died in the line of duty since independence; officials seek better gear, insurance

SHARIFUL ISLAM

On November 3, 1971, while the nation was fighting for independence, another battle took place at the Gupthakali canal in Chattogram. A nearby fire station was informed that a fire had broken out on an oil tanker carrying 1,000 tonnes of kerosene and 30 tonnes of gasoline.

Firefighter Nurul Alam and his team rushed to the scene and worked tirelessly to put out

the fire. Sadly, the ship exploded. Nurul died, and 18 of his fellow firefighters were injured.

He did not receive a war medal, but to his colleagues, he

was a hero -- one who fought a different kind of battle, where fire, not bullets, took lives.

The Fire Service and Civil Defence of Bangladesh has a long history of bravery. Since independence, 47 members have died while on duty. Their stories speak of courage, kindness, and selfless service. The worst incident occurred on June 4, 2022, at the BM

Container Depot in Sitakunda, Chattogram, where explosions killed 13 firefighters.

The most recent loss was Sohanur Zaman Nayan from Mithapukur in Rangpur. Nayan was the only son of a farmer. On December 26, 2024, a fire broke out in Building 7 of the secretariat. While running with a hose to fight the fire, he was hit by a truck. The flames did not

reach him, but danger came in another form. Doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital could not save him.

Like many countries, Bangladesh will observe International Firefighters' Day today. It is a day to honour the bravery and sacrifice of firefighters worldwide. The day was established in 1999 after five firefighters died in a wildfire in Linton, Australia. Since then, it has become a global event to appreciate firefighters' work.

This Sunday, the Fire Service and Civil Defence will recognise 40 field-level firefighters, divers, and officials from all six divisions for their outstanding performances. Special prayers will also be offered for those who lost their lives or are still recovering from injuries.

A fire service official said current compensation for injury

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'Aid corridor may drag Bangladesh into conflict'  
Warns BNP leader Hafiz

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh could be drawn into a conflict without the consent of its citizens, following the interim government's decision to open a "humanitarian corridor" for Myanmar's war-torn Rakhine State, said senior BNP leader Major (retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed yesterday.

Speaking at the launch of the Bangladesh District and Divisional Sports Organisers Association at the National Sports Council auditorium in Dhaka, Hafiz said the current administration's move could have serious implications for national sovereignty and security, reports UNB.

"Are we about to become involved in a war without public consent? People are deeply anxious. So are we," Hafiz said.

Hafiz also expressed serious doubts about the timeline for the next general election, accusing the interim government of intentionally delaying the process.

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JU bans outsiders on campus ahead of Jucsu polls

JU CORRESPONDENT

The Jahangirnagar University (JU) administration has imposed a ban on outsiders on the campus, effective from yesterday.

The decision was taken to ensure security on the campus ahead of the long-awaited Jahangirnagar University Central Students' Union (Jucsu) and Residential Hall Union elections, said a press release signed by Mohammad Mahiuddin, acting director of JU's Public Relations Office.

This restriction will remain in place until further notice.

"All stakeholders of the university are requested to carry their respective identity cards while on campus," said the press release.

Jucsu polls is scheduled to be held on July 31.

Child injured in N'ganj gas cylinder blast dies

UNB, Dhaka

A child who sustained severe burn injuries in a gas cylinder explosion in Narayanganj died at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in Dhaka yesterday.

The deceased, Ayan, was one year old.

Dr Shawon Bin Rahman, resident surgeon at the institute, said Ayan succumbed to his injuries at around 7:30am.

The child was among four persons who sustained injuries in a fire that broke out following a gas cylinder explosion at Manju Textile Mill in Kazi Para area of Rupganj upazila on Thursday.