



## Nusraat Faria out on bail

Expresses gratitude to wellwishers, media for support



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After spending two nights behind bars, actor Nusraat Faria yesterday walked out of jail after securing bail in an attempted murder case tied to last year's July uprising.

Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Mostafizur Rahman passed the bail order around 10:30am after hearing her petition, her lawyer Mohammad Iftekhar Hossain confirmed to The Daily Star.

In the bail order, the judge said the court granted bail as the investigating officer submitted a report confirming

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



Supporters of BNP leader Ishraque Hossain block the Golapshah Mazar road at Gulistan for over five hours from 10:00am yesterday as they continued their demonstration for the sixth consecutive day demanding Ishraque be sworn in as the mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Conspiracy afoot to delay national polls: Fakhru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday said that a "well-orchestrated conspiracy" is underway to delay the upcoming national election and deprive citizens of their voting rights.

"Today is one of the most crucial and significant moments. Through the bloodshed of thousands of students and people, a new opportunity has emerged -- to establish democracy and to build a modern state free from fascism. And yet, we see a dark shadow looms," he said.

He made the remarks while virtually addressing a joint meeting of the BNP and its affiliated bodies from Thailand, where he is recovering after undergoing an eye surgery.

A certain group has begun engaging in divisive politics, Fakhru said. "A plot has begun to pit various government institutions against each other."

The BNP leader accused certain infiltrators within the government of plotting to mislead the country and divert it from its democratic path.

In this context, Fakhru called on party leaders and activists to stay alert and stand against any kind of conspiracy.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



## Starlink launches, starting price Tk 4,200 a month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Starlink has officially launched its satellite-based internet service in Bangladesh, offering unlimited data with speeds of up to 300 Mbps.

Customers can now subscribe to either the Tk 6,000 "Starlink Residential" package or the Tk 4,200 "Residential Lite" plan. Both require a one-time installation fee of Tk 47,000.



Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser for the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology, confirmed the launch on Facebook. Starlink also announced the rollout on its official X account.

The company began operations within 90 days of receiving a licence from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) on April 29. Officials say this marks the fastest issuance of a Non-Geostationary Orbit (NGSO) satellite internet licence in the country's history.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus congratulated all those involved in the launch of Starlink in Bangladesh,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

## Govt targets lowest budget deficit in 14 years

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The interim government plans to reduce the national budget deficit to 3.6 percent of gross domestic product in the upcoming fiscal year -- the lowest in 14 years -- as it seeks to rebuild fiscal credibility, limit borrowing, and ease pressure from rising debt servicing costs.

The proposed deficit for fiscal 2025-26 marks a sharp departure from more than a decade of looser fiscal policy. Since 2010-11, when the deficit stood at 3.8 percent, Bangladesh has routinely run deficits exceeding 5 percent, with pandemic-era spending pushing it above 6 percent.

Now, a key objective of the new budget strategy is to cut both domestic and external borrowing to reduce the country's debt risk from "moderate" to "lower". Officials say this will help avoid a future scenario where a significant share of the budget is consumed by interest and loan repayments.

"It will be a budget for restoring discipline in the financial sector," said Planning Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud after a high-level meeting this week. "Our objective is to avoid falling into a debt trap, where a significant portion of the budget is consumed by loan repayments -- be it operating costs or interest payments."

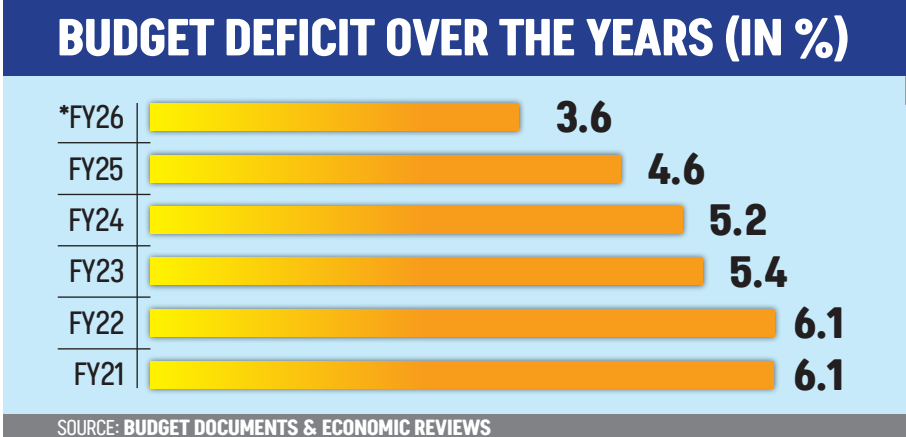
The government aims to contain total expenditure at 12.7 percent of GDP, down from 14.2 percent in the original budget for the current fiscal year. As the overall budget size will be smaller, officials say it is designed with macroeconomic stability and long-term sustainability in mind.

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed echoed this emphasis on discipline. "We'll

try our best to reduce the budget deficit significantly. While cutting administrative expenses is difficult, the government plans to curb expenditure by dropping large, capital-intensive infrastructure projects," he told The Daily Star in an interview.

with consumer prices remaining above 9 percent since March 2023, even as inflation eased globally.

By narrowing the gap between revenue and expenditure, the government hopes to reduce its reliance on central bank



The revised budget for the current fiscal year has already brought the deficit down to 4 percent, from the originally planned 4.6 percent, setting the stage for further tightening in the next fiscal year starting July 1.

For that year, the government projects a budget deficit of Tk 2,26,000 crore, to be financed through Tk 1,25,000 crore from domestic sources and the remainder from foreign loans and grants.

In recent years, Bangladesh has relied heavily on central bank borrowing to finance its deficit. That dependence exacerbated inflationary pressures,

financing, identified by some economists as a key driver of persistent inflation.

The move to restore fiscal discipline is long overdue. "To break this vicious cycle, revenue must be increased, but expenditure must also remain limited," Mahmud said.

Economists have long warned that Bangladesh's dependence on borrowing and its weak revenue mobilisation pose structural risks. The interim administration's pivot toward consolidation and restraint is being seen as a serious effort to restore macroeconomic balance and strengthen the country's readiness for graduation from LDC status.

## 3 detained by cops released on NCP leader's bond

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three young men, including a now former leader of the Students Against Discrimination, who were detained on Monday night following an altercation with police in the capital's Dhanmondi, were released yesterday.

Police let them go after Abdul Hannan Masud, senior joint chief coordinator of the National Citizen Party, gave an undertaking that the men would not engage in such activities in the future.

One of the three men, Saiful Islam Rabbi, was the coordinator of the Mohammadpur unit of the Students Against Discrimination (SAD).

The SAD, which spearheaded the movement that led to the fall of Awami League regime, wrote on Facebook later that Saiful Islam Rabbi has been relieved of all organisational duties "due to moral misconduct".

Dhanmondi police earlier said they detained Rabbi and two others after they tried to forcibly enter the residence of a publisher, accusing him of being a "fascist agent".

When police went to the scene, they asked officers to arrest the publisher. As police pointed out that there was no complaint against the publisher, the men engaged in a heated argument with police.

The officers then detained them.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

## Pak, India agree to withdraw troops

Says Pak security official; BSF resumes sunset ceremony on its side of Wagah border

AFP, Amritsar/ Islamabad

Pakistan and India have agreed to withdraw troop reinforcements deployed during their recent conflict back to their peacetime positions by the end of May, a senior Pakistani security official told AFP yesterday.

"Troops will be withdrawn to pre-conflict positions by the end of May," the senior security official told AFP on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

The official said both countries agreed a phased withdrawal of the additional troops and weaponry deployed, mostly on the already heavily militarised de facto border in Kashmir, known as the Line of Control (LoC).

It comes after the Indian army last week said both sides agreed to take "immediate measures to ensure troop reduction from the borders and forward areas".

"All of these steps were initially planned to be completed within 10 days, but minor issues caused delays," the Pakistani official added.

Meanwhile, India said yesterday it would resume a daily border ceremony with neighbouring Pakistan which it briefly halted earlier this month following the conflict.

India's Border Security force (BSF) said the sunset ceremony on its side was opened to the media yesterday

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



A woman walks past an anti-US mural near the former US embassy in Tehran yesterday. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday said that nuclear talks with the United States were unlikely to yield any results.

PHOTO: AFP

## Dearness allowance for civil servants on the cards

Salehuddin says announcement may come in next budget

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering introducing a dearness allowance for public servants in the upcoming national budget, said Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed.

A committee has already been formed to work on the issue, he told reporters after a meeting of the advisory committee on government purchase at the Secretariat in Dhaka yesterday.

However, he did not specify the rate at which the allowance may be offered.

When asked Salehuddin refrained from commenting on the dissolution of the National Board of Revenue, adding that the finance ministry would issue a press release in this regard.