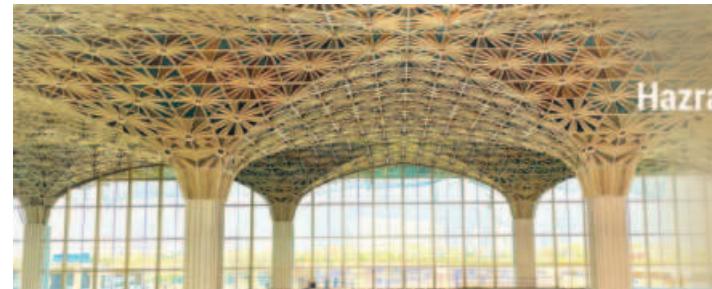


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## SUHRAWARDY UDYAN Jamaat to press for 7-point demand at today's rally

RASHIDUL HASAN

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami will hold its "national rally" at Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital today, pressing for a seven-point demand that includes ensuring a level playing field for a free, fair, neutral, and peaceful election.

This marks Jamaat's first-ever political rally at the historic venue, where the party aims to gather around 10 to 15 lakh supporters from across the country in a display of political strength, several senior leaders told The Daily Star.

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair said the grand rally could serve as a political turning point for the party as it aims to build momentum from the event and carry it through to the 13th parliamentary election slated for next year.

"We aim to stage a mammoth gathering and hope it marks the beginning of a new chapter in our party's history," he said.

Top leaders of different Islamic and other parties have been invited to the rally.

The party's other demands are:

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**Won't stop until  
we dismantle  
the old system**  
Nahid urges people to  
prepare for another  
uprising, if needed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Saying that the country remains under the grip of an old mafia-style system, National Citizen Party Convener Nahid Islam yesterday urged people to be ready for another uprising if the situation demands it.

He said that although people shed blood last year to change the system, it has yet to be reformed.

"After the mass uprising, we said the system by which this state operates needs to change," Nahid said at a rally in Narayanganj, held as part of the party's ongoing "July March to Build the Nation" campaign.

He called Narayanganj the "best example" of the old system where dynastic politics, mafia rule, and godfather-style control have merged, enabling extortion and terrorism.

"We will not abide by the rules of this mafia system. We will not take part in the old game. The uprising was against this;

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**US Congress  
okays \$9b cuts  
to foreign aid,  
public media**

AFP, Washington

US Republicans early yesterday approved President Donald Trump's plan to cancel \$9 billion in funding for foreign aid and public broadcasting, vowing it was just the start of broader efforts by Congress to slash the federal budget.

The cuts achieve only a tiny fraction of the \$1 trillion in annual savings that tech billionaire and estranged Trump donor Elon Musk vowed to find before his acrimonious exit in May from a role spearheading federal cost-cutting.

But Republicans -- who recently passed a domestic policy bill expected to add more than \$3 trillion to US debt -- said the vote honored Trump's election campaign pledge to rein in runaway spending.

"President Trump and House Republicans promised fiscal responsibility and government efficiency," House Speaker Mike Johnson said in a statement just after the vote.



The Sarail Biswa Road intersection on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Brahmanbaria resembles a ploughed field, with uneven muddy surfaces, potholes filled with rainwater, and imprints of heavy vehicle tyres. Since the onset of monsoon, this one-kilometre stretch has become nearly impassable, causing frequent accidents and triggering traffic congestion stretching up to 20-30 km. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDOV

## Israel strikes kill 30 Palestinians in Gaza

Six aid seekers among dead; drone missiles 'packed with nails' used in airstrikes

AGENCIES

Gaza's civil defence agency said yesterday that Israeli strikes killed 30 people in the north and south of the war-ravaged Palestinian territory.

The emergency service said fighter jets conducted air strikes and there was artillery shelling and gunfire in the early morning in areas north of the southern city of Khan Yunis.

Three people died in an Israeli attack on the Tuffali neighbourhood of eastern Gaza City. Five people were also killed in an Israeli air attack in Jabalia an-Nazla, in northern Gaza.

Earlier, an Israeli attack hit tents sheltering displaced Palestinians in al-Mawasi, southern Gaza -- previously designated a so-called "safe zone" -- igniting a major fire and killing at least five people, including infants. Al-Mawasi has come under repeated, deadly Israeli fire.

The death toll also includes six people who were desperately seeking aid. The injured, including children, were transferred to Nasser Hospital. Some showed wounds compatible with drone attacks, said Al Jazeera's correspondent Hani Mahmoud.

"Drone missiles are packed with nails, metals and shrapnel that explodes at high speed, causing internal bleeding," Mahmoud

said. "These attacks are on the rise and target people in large crowds, in markets or while queuing for water."

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the highest ranking Catholic official in Jerusalem, entered Gaza yesterday to bring humanitarian aid and comfort to victims of Israel's strike on the sole Catholic church of the Palestinian enclave.

Three people died and several were injured in the strike on the Holy Family Church compound in Gaza City a day earlier. Photos released by the church showed its roof had been hit close to the main cross, scorching the stone facade, and that windows had been broken.

Mediators present updated truce proposal to Israel, Hamas

Trump called Netanyahu to address strike on Catholic church

Cardinal brings humanitarian aid to Gaza

Trump seeks to release some of Epstein files

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump yesterday attempted to control the storm triggered by a bombshell report on his friendship with Jeffrey Epstein, ordering the Justice Department to seek the release of testimony from the prosecution of the late, alleged sex-trafficker-to-the-famous.

Trump also vowed to sue "the ass off" The Wall Street Journal and its owner Rupert Murdoch after the newspaper said that in 2003, the future president wrote a raunchy letter to Epstein, referring to their shared "secret."

"I look forward to getting Rupert Murdoch to testify in my lawsuit against him and his 'pile of garbage' newspaper, the WSJ. That will be an interesting experience!!" Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

Attorney General Pam Bondi said the Justice Department would ask a court to unseal grand jury

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## Europe's oldest lake settlement uncovered in Albania

REUTERS, LIN

Archaeologists working on the shores of Ohrid Lake in Albania are convinced they have uncovered the oldest human settlement built on a European lake, finding evidence of an organised hunting and farming community living up to 8,000 years ago.



The team, from Switzerland and Albania, spends hours each day about three metres (9.8 feet) underwater, painstakingly retrieving wooden stilts that supported houses.

They are also collecting bones of domesticated and wild animals, copper objects and ceramics, featuring detailed carvings.

Albert Hafner, from the University of Bern, said similar settlements have been found in Alpine and Mediterranean regions, but the settlements in the village of Lin are half a millennium older, dating back between 6,000 and 8,000 years.

"Because it is under water, the organic material is well-preserved and this allows us to find out what these people have been eating, what they have been planting," Hafner said.

Multiple studies show that Lake Ohrid, shared by North Macedonia and Albania, is the oldest lake in Europe, at over one million years.

## UKRAINE WAR

## EU hits Russia with sweeping new sanctions

Zelensky hails the move; Kremlin says 'illegal' sanctions will backfire

AFP, Brussels

The EU yesterday adopted a sweeping new package of sanctions on Russia over the Ukraine war, looking to pile more pressure on the Kremlin by lowering a price cap for Moscow's oil exports.

The 18th round of economic measures from Europe against Russia since its 2022 invasion comes as allies hope US President Donald Trump follows through on his threat to punish Moscow for stalling peace efforts.

"The EU just approved one of its strongest sanctions packages against Russia to date," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said.

"The message is clear: Europe will not back down in its support for Ukraine. The EU will keep raising the pressure until Russia ends its war."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hailed the sanctions' adoption as "essential and timely". Moscow downplayed the impact of fresh sanctions, saying they were "illegal" and would backfire.

"We will certainly analyse the new package in order to minimise its impact," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, including AFP, on a briefing call.

Meanwhile, Russian drone and bomb fire killed at least six people across Ukraine's east and south, local authorities said yesterday.



Artwork painted on the walls of a pump house beneath the metro rail tracks depicts last year's mass uprising. The initiative, led by the Ministry of Local Government, is being carried out by the Dhaka North City Corporation. The photo was taken yesterday on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS